

Thank you for your interest in the update to the General Plan Guidelines. This process has involved extensive outreach, engagement, and collaboration with state agencies and stakeholders, and there is still work to be done! As we begin the public review period of the draft content, we continue to refine and improve the model policies, data, and resources sections throughout the document.

This is a public draft of the update to the General Plan Guidelines for the State of California. This comprehensive update seeks to create a suite of tools for planners, practitioners, and the general public to help update local general plans. This “general plan guidelines package,” once complete, will include:

- The general plan guidelines document (draft of text only presented here) updated with sections on visioning, community engagement, social equity, resilience, economic development, healthy communities, and climate change, as well as links to data, tools, resources, and model policies throughout
- The general plan guidelines GIS based data mapping tool, currently in beta (<http://maps.gis.ca.gov/demos/opr/genplan/Landing.html>) being updated during this review, which will allow all users access to large amounts of free data, organized by elements and by themes, for creating their general plans
- The updated general plan guidelines website which will house the document, the data tool, and links to resources, examples, and other tools. The new website will be easily navigable, allowing the user to access the information they want without having to dig through hundreds of documents, but also directing them to related information and resources.

We will be conducting extensive outreach during this review period to engage diverse community members on the guidelines and the tool. The guidelines, presented here, are text only, in order to solicit feedback on content alone. The final document will include graphics, additional model policies with links, and additional data suggestions with links. It will also be presented on a user friendly platform, allowing users the option to use the online format or download a pdf.

The tool is being updated with additional data layers, informed by data experts across sectors. Additionally, we will periodically create sample maps using the GPG mapping tool, to demonstrate new or existing functionality and uses.

Please note, this draft has not incorporated any changes from legislation in the current cycle, such as SB 379. These changes will be incorporated prior to finalizing the draft.

We welcome any comments, questions, or other feedback you may have on this draft. The public comment period will last 60 days, and end at 5PM on December 18th. Please send any comments to info@opr.ca.gov. Thank you

Director’s Message

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Acknowledgements

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Planning Healthy, Equitable, Resilient, and Economically Vibrant Places

"By far the greatest and most admirable form of wisdom is that needed to plan and beautify cities and human communities."

--Socrates

The general plan is more than the legal underpinning for land use decisions; it is a vision about how a community will grow, reflecting community priorities and values while shaping the future. To assist local governments in preparing general plans and the public in participating in that process, the [Governor's Office of Planning and Research \(OPR\)](#) periodically revises guidelines for the preparation and content of local general plans ([Government Code §65040.2](#)).

The 2015 edition of the *General Plan Guidelines* (GPG) contains significant changes. For mandatory and common optional elements of the general plan, the GPG sets out each statutory requirement in detail, provides OPR recommended policy language, and includes online links to city and county general plans that have adopted similar policies. A sample selection of policies can be found directly in the text, and users can click the link provided for more detailed policies and plans. The GPG is searchable, and all model policy language

NEW in the 2015 *General Plan Guidelines* suite of tools:

- [GPG Online Mapping Tool](#), enabling free, easy access to helpful data for cities and counties
- Links to additional online tools and resources
- Recommended policies in cut and paste format, with examples of adopted policy language
- Reformatted sections on the mandatory elements
- Expanded equity and environmental justice section
- [Infill compendium](#)
- [Renewable energy compendium](#)
- [Model template for mitigation of agricultural land conversion](#)
- A new section on [healthy communities](#)
- An updated section on [economic considerations in planning](#)
- A new section on [climate change](#)

can be easily edited to serve the needs of local communities. The update includes new resources and templates for cities and counties to use in considering themes, structures, and policies for their general plans, including new compendiums on [infill development](#), [renewable energy](#), and [mitigation of agricultural land conversion](#). As more resources become available, they will be added to these General Plan Guidelines. The new online platform will allow OPR to add updated text, links, and information to the GPG, and announce any additions through the GPG listserv and on the OPR website. The GPG is intended to be a resource for planners to use to accomplish their community's priorities and vision while meeting larger state goals.

The process of adopting a general plan has become too time-consuming and costly for many jurisdictions. As of 2015, more than half of local jurisdictions have general plans that are over fifteen years old. In order to streamline the process and reduce the cost, this first comprehensive update of OPR's *General Plan Guidelines* (GPG) since 2003 provides free online tools and resources, increases use of online data, and includes templates and links. The [GPG Online Mapping tool](#) draws data sets from multiple sources, allowing users to incorporate local, regional, and state wide data into local general plans without cost. These new resources will help facilitate better, faster, and efficient development of general plan updates for communities of all sizes throughout the state.

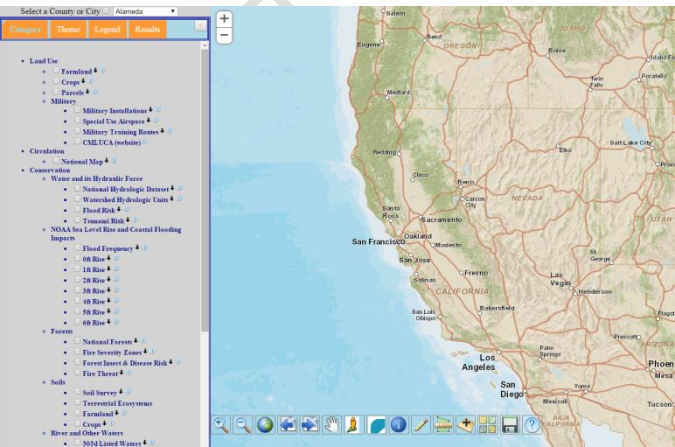
The term "element" refers to the topics covered in the general plan. While statute mandates certain elements in the plan, there is neither a mandatory structure nor a maximum number of topics that a general plan may address. The general plan is the perfect space for innovation, reflecting the unique character of each community. The format and content of general plans can and should vary between jurisdictions. Elements must be addressed, but general plans can be organized by values (core concepts that the community wants to enhance or uphold), themes (overarching issues identified by the community as important), challenges or goals identified through community engagement, as well as by the elements themselves. Cities and counties may create new models of organizing their general plans, based on the needs and priorities identified during public engagement. [Riverside County](#), for example, included a healthy communities element in its general plan update. The [City of Fullerton](#) structured its general plan around four focus areas, identified through community engagement, and addressed all of the elements in those areas. Some cities and counties have focused on specific values or challenges that are important to them, and shaped their

plans around those issues. The [City of Sacramento](#) framed its general plan around sustainability and livable communities, and focused each of the required elements-as well as additional elements- around those goals. The GPG is designed to assist every city and county in accordance with the local jurisdiction’s vision, using whatever structure achieves the goals of the community.

Figure 1: Examples of General Plan Layout



The 2015 GPG includes a free [online mapping tool](#). The tool is organized around the



requirements for the mandatory elements as well as themes, and provides Geographic Information Systems (GIS) resources for use by city and county planners drafting a general plan. The tool provides access to data (varying as available between county, city, and parcel level information) to help inform decision making processes, on a platform

specifically designed for general plans as well as enhanced public participation in the process.

Recommendations and Sample Language

OPR has included recommendations and sample policy language to provide cities and counties with information, data, examples, and ideas to consider in their general plan. These recommendations may not fit the needs of every city and county or every circumstance. Rather, they present a toolbox of options, allowing jurisdictions to utilize them as provided, modify them as appropriate within statutory requirements, or consider them as examples to inform their own, unique policies.

According to state law,

"decisions involving the future growth of the state, most of which are made and will continue to be made at the local level, should be guided by an effective planning process, including the local general plan, and should proceed within the framework of officially approved statewide goals and policies directed to land use, population growth and distribution, development, open space, resource preservation and utilization, air and water quality, and other related physical, social and economic development factors."[\(Gov Code §65030.1\)](#)

The following is an excerpt from the Environmental Goals and Policy Report and the statutory State Planning Priorities, as they appear in Government Code [§65041.1](#). The GPG is intended to implement the policies from both by recommending an approach for cities and counties to incorporate policies that achieve these goals at a local level.

The state planning priorities, which are intended to promote equity, strengthen the economy, protect the environment, and promote public health and safety in the state, including in urban, suburban, and rural communities, shall be as follows:

(a) To promote infill development and equity by rehabilitating, maintaining, and improving existing infrastructure that supports infill development and appropriate reuse and redevelopment of previously developed, underutilized land that is presently served by transit, streets, water, sewer, and other essential services, particularly in underserved areas, and to preserve cultural and historic resources.

(b) To protect environmental and agricultural resources by protecting, preserving, and enhancing the state's most valuable natural resources, including working landscapes such as farm, range, and forest lands, natural lands such as wetlands, watersheds, wildlife habitats, and other wildlands, recreation lands such as parks, trails, greenbelts, and other open space, and landscapes with locally unique features and areas identified by the state as deserving special protection.

(c) To encourage efficient development patterns by ensuring that any infrastructure associated with development, other than infill development, supports new development that does all of the following:

(1) Uses land efficiently.

(2) Is built adjacent to existing developed areas to the extent consistent with the priorities specified pursuant to subdivision (b).

(3) Is located in an area appropriately planned for growth.

(4) Is served by adequate transportation and other essential utilities and services.

(5) Minimizes ongoing costs to taxpayers.

These *General Plan Guidelines* are advisory. Nevertheless, courts periodically refer to the GPG to interpret planning law. For this reason, the GPG closely adheres to statute and case law. It also relies upon commonly accepted principles of contemporary planning practice. The following words are used to indicate whether a particular subject in the GPG is mandatory, advisory, or permissive:

(a) “Must” or “shall” identifies a mandatory element which all public agencies are required to follow.

(b) “Should” identifies guidance provided by OPR based on policy considerations contained in California's planning laws.

(c) “May” identifies a permissive element which is left fully to the discretion of the local governments involved.

The GPG was updated in coordination with a number of other tool, policy, and program update efforts to ensure references to external tools support the intent of the GPG. Some examples of these concurrent updates include:

[General Plan Guidelines tool](#)

[AB32 Scoping Plan Update](#)

[Safeguarding California Plan](#)

[California State Wellness Plan](#)

[State Hazard Mitigation Plan](#)

[California Water Plan](#)

[Adaptation Planning Guide](#)

CEQA Update

[Cal-Adapt](#)

[SB 743](#)

[Cool California](#)

[Environmental Goals and Policy Report](#)

[California State Energy Efficiency](#)

[Collaborative GHG and climate tools](#)

732, 244, and other legislation advisories

[California Coastal Commission Local](#)

[Coastal Plan guidance](#)

The GPG also includes new sections on [healthy communities](#), [equity](#), [economic development](#), and [climate change](#); as well as compendiums on [infill development](#), [renewable energy](#), and [agricultural land conservation](#).

How to Use these Guidelines:

The General Plan Guidelines are intended to be user friendly and practical for planners, decision makers, and the general public. The GPG and the [GPG mapping tool](#) can be used to frame conversations around planning, evaluate data and identify priorities, research formats and policies from similar communities, and enhance capacity for fiscally constrained departments and organizations working to update general plans. Each chapter of the GPG lays out the requirements contained in statute, connections to other requirements, additional considerations, and related data and policies to consider. Recognizing the vast diversity of California's communities in size, demographics, geography, economics, and resources, the GPG presents examples in various jurisdictions whenever possible.

Statutory Requirements

Each statutory requirement includes a text box with the statutory language for each element, exactly as it appears in statute. The information following the statutory language contains OPR's recommendations for meeting the requirement. Each statutory reference is hyperlinked to the full text of the government code for easy access.

Requirement Description

This section includes a description of considerations, resources, data, and other information for developing general plan policies. Many elements are interrelated, so linkages between elements are noted in tables through each section. This section also includes additional information through hyperlinks, which lead to examples and resources.

Recommended Data

Each section also includes recommendations for data that jurisdictions may wish to use to examine and determine specific needs and policies. The data is identified in tables according to the potential intent of analysis. Where links to the recommended data are available, they are provided in the table, leading directly to the [GPG Online Mapping tool](#). Because the same data may be useful for multiple analytical purposes, some data links to multiple sections of the guidelines. The recommended data is not exhaustive, and is meant to serve as a starting point to consider the specific needs of a community and the data that may help inform decisions around those needs.

Recommended Policies

The Government Code directs OPR to provide land use policy advice. In order to do so, the GPG includes both general plan policy recommendations and links to external resources that provide policy guidance. Where possible, links are provided to external reports, case studies, and jurisdictions that have adopted the model policies.

Many of the policy recommendations are based on adopted state programs described in the draft [Environmental Goals and Policy Report](#)—an overview of the state's environmental goals and the key steps needed to achieve them. OPR also examined current academic publications and conducted extensive outreach to local governments, community, and advocacy groups in building policy recommendations. Cross-cutting recommendations include consideration of [equity](#), [health](#), and [climate](#) issues within jurisdictions, communities,

and regions. With thoughtful planning, the State of California will foster a future that has a strong economy, thriving built and natural environments, and a healthy, prosperous citizenry.

GPG policy recommendations focus on four key themes.

1. [Climate Change](#): In California, climate change has been the subject of multiple Executive Orders and legislation. It is a high priority subject for any general plan update. [EO S-03-05](#) established long term targets for 2020 and 2050 for emissions reductions in California, and [EO S-13-08](#) established climate change adaptation and resilience as a priority. Further State goals include reduction of petroleum use by up to 50 percent by 2030, and increased percentage of renewable energy to 50 percent by 2030. The State of California has set greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction requirements through numerous mechanisms including land use and transportation planning. (See [AB 32](#), [SB 375](#), and [SB 743](#) as examples). The [AB32 Scoping Plan](#) includes sections on local government and the importance of local action to help achieve statewide climate goals. Additionally, [the Safeguarding California Plan, Cal-Adapt, Climate Change Handbook for Regional Water Planning, and the Adaptation Planning Guide provide guidance for resilience and adaptation efforts](#). OPR's GPG recommendations focus on how the general plan can achieve both GHG emission reductions and resiliency to climate change impacts and lead to healthier communities.
2. [Economics](#): Policies throughout all elements of the general plan greatly affect economic opportunity, development, and stability. Decisions regarding land use and circulation have direct and indirect fiscal implications, and in turn economies of urban and rural centers affect the health, climate, and equity of communities. As with all general plan topics, even if addressed in a separate section, economic development must link and integrate with other elements in order to be successful
3. [Healthy Communities](#): In 2012 the Governor issued [Executive Order B-19-12](#) and created the Governor's [Let's Get Healthy California Task Force](#). Chronic disease, such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and asthma affect quality of life and productivity. Health and well-being are affected by many factors, including the social, economic, and environmental factors where people live, work, and play. The Task Force identified the creation and expansion of healthy communities to be one of three major focus areas for the promotion of overall health improvement at the population level. Because planning

offers one important way to improve the community's health, OPR offers recommendations for jurisdictions interested in incorporating health-supporting policies into their general plan.

4. Equitable Opportunities: Planning decisions affect the entire community, and the entire community must be allowed equal access to the public process ([Gov Code §11135](#)). From determining proximity to localized noise or air pollution, to providing healthy grocery options, to creating access to employment and education opportunity, planning and policy affect everyone. Incorporating equity in to all aspects of planning will ensure that residents of a city or county benefits from reduced GHG emissions, climate change adaptation policies, active transportation options, and healthy communities with access to economic opportunity for all. OPR's recommendations for equity incorporate statutory requirements for Environmental Justice guidance ([§65040.12\(c\)](#)) with an expanded focus on equity throughout the general plan.
 - Additionally, based on statewide goals, the update includes model guides and best practices related to [infill development](#), [renewable energy](#), and [mitigation of agricultural land conversion](#).

Readers should note that the recommended policies are simply recommendations, intended to provide a starting point from which local governments can craft unique policies reflecting the priorities and circumstances of their communities.

The GPG aims to create a suite of tools for communities to utilize in updating their general plans. By providing information, resources, and data on statutory requirements as well as non-statutory considerations relevant to planning, the GPG can help diverse community members work together towards a shared vision for their future growth.

Chapter 2: A Vision for Long-Range Planning

Designing Healthy, Equitable, Resilient, and Economically Vibrant Places

*"A city is not gauged by its length and width, but by the broadness of its vision
and the height of its dreams."*

--Herb Caen

Local General Plans and Statewide Goals

California state law requires each city and county to adopt a general plan "for the physical development of the county or city, and any land outside its boundaries which bears relation to its planning" ([§65300](#)). The general plan expresses the community's development goals and embodies public policy relative to the distribution of future land uses, both public and private. The California Supreme Court has called the general plan the "constitution for future development." But the general plan extends far beyond land use.

California's population is [projected](#) to reach 50 million residents by 2050. Accommodating this growth while protecting the state's environment, supporting equitable development and a strong economy, and preserving the State's natural and working landscapes -- all in the context of climate change -- will be critical in the coming decades. Cities and counties are key partners in achieving these goals. **A local general plan should start with a community vision, to create a shared understanding that will help set priorities throughout the planning process, and inform decision makers about community values. Creating a community vision may include:**

- Looking back to identify past challenges and accomplishments
- Examining current data and emerging data trends
- Considering future issues, challenges, and goals

The [City of Chula Vista](#) held numerous community workshops to craft their vision statement, and used it to inform future goals and policies. The [City of Chino](#) utilized existing events to engage the community in developing its vision statement, traveling to farmers markets,

events, and local groups before meeting with city officials to craft the final statement. Chino also used the vision statement to inform the land use diagram used in their general plan, ensuring the community's values were reflected in the future growth of the city.

California's Planning Priorities

Statewide planning priorities were first articulated in the [1978 Urban Strategy](#) for California and were adopted into law in 2002. Briefly, the priorities are to:

1. Promote infill development and rehabilitation and utilization of existing infrastructure, including water, sewer, and transportation.
2. To protect the state's natural and working lands, including agricultural land, lands of cultural and historic significance, wetlands, and wildlands.
3. To develop in an efficient manner that limits sprawl and minimizes costs to taxpayers.

These priorities are intended to inform planning and investment at all levels of government.

As of this update, the state is in the midst of a severe drought, continues to lose agricultural lands due to conversion, and several regions in the state continue to face severe air quality challenges. However, one major difference between today and similar conditions in the 1970s is the robust suite of environmental goals and policies. These have helped improve the quality of the state's environment and will continue to serve the state.

Most importantly, the suite of policies that California has adopted to address climate change will touch on nearly every facet of the state's development.

California's Climate Change Policy and Local Communities

Climate pollution and the effects of climate change pose great risks for Californians, including more frequent and more intense forest fires, air pollution and deadly heat waves, a significant reduction in the snowpack and state water supplies, sea level rise and erosion along California's long coastline, and billions of dollars in damage to our agricultural, tourism, recreation, and other industries. These impacts have the potential to be hugely disruptive to how local governments operate.

California's Planning Priorities

California Government Code: 65041.1

The state planning priorities, which are intended to promote equity, strengthen the economy, protect the environment, and promote public health and safety in the state, including in urban suburban, and rural communities, shall be as follows:

(a) To promote infill development and equity by rehabilitating, maintaining, and improving existing infrastructure that supports infill development and appropriate reuse and redevelopment of previously developed, underutilized land that is presently served by transit, streets, water, sewer, and other essential services, particularly in underserved areas, and to preserving cultural and historic resources.

(b) To protect environmental and agricultural resources by protecting, preserving, and enhancing the state's most valuable natural resources, including working landscapes such as farm, range, and forest lands, natural lands such as wetlands, watersheds, wildlife habitats, and other wildlands, recreation lands such as parks, trails, greenbelts, and other open space, and landscapes with locally unique features and areas identified by the state as deserving special protection.

(c) To encourage efficient development patterns by ensuring that any infrastructure associated with development, other than infill development, supports new development that does all of the following:

- (1) Uses land efficiently.
- (2) Is built adjacent to existing developed areas to the extent consistent with the priorities specified pursuant to subdivision (b).
- (3) Is located in an area appropriately planned for growth.
- (4) Is served by adequate transportation and other essential utilities and services.
- (5) Minimizes ongoing costs to taxpayers.

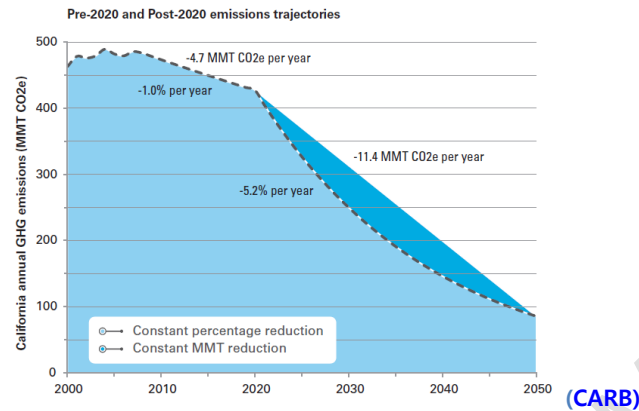
Draft for Public Comment

[Executive Order S-03-05](#)

established greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for the state. Subsequently, [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 32](#), known as the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, established a comprehensive program to achieve quantifiable, cost-effective reductions of greenhouse gases on a scheduled basis. The 2014 [revised AB32 scoping plan](#) highlights the importance of local government in reducing emissions to achieve longer-term statewide goals.

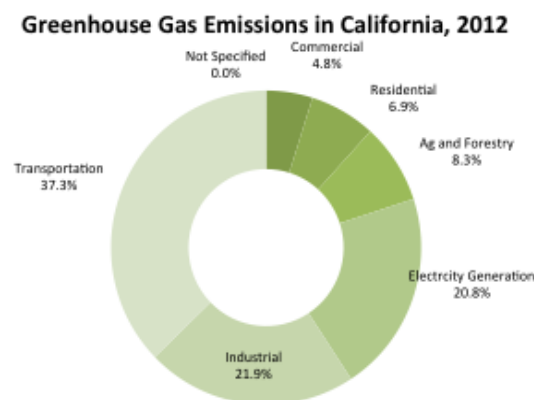
In order to achieve California's 2050 emissions goal of 80% below 1990 levels, emissions must decline several times faster than the rate needed to reach the 2020 emissions limit.

Figure 2: GHG Emission reductions will need to occur at a faster rate to achieve the state's 2050 GHG emission reduction target



Transportation and electricity generation are the largest sources of the state's GHG emissions. State policies are focused on reducing transportation emissions through cleaner fuels and vehicles and promoting alternatives to driving (e.g., walking, biking, transit, and carpooling). The State's goals for renewable energy and energy efficiency will reduce emissions from electricity generation.

Figure 3: GHG emissions in California are dominated by emissions from transportation and electricity generation
(Data from: California Air Resources Board)



Why the General Plan Matters

While the goals discussed above have been established at a state level, cities and counties are critical partners in helping to achieve them. General plans reflect state and local goals and how they will be achieved. In addition, they benefit local communities by promoting better projects and outcomes, streamlined processes, and improved access and use of

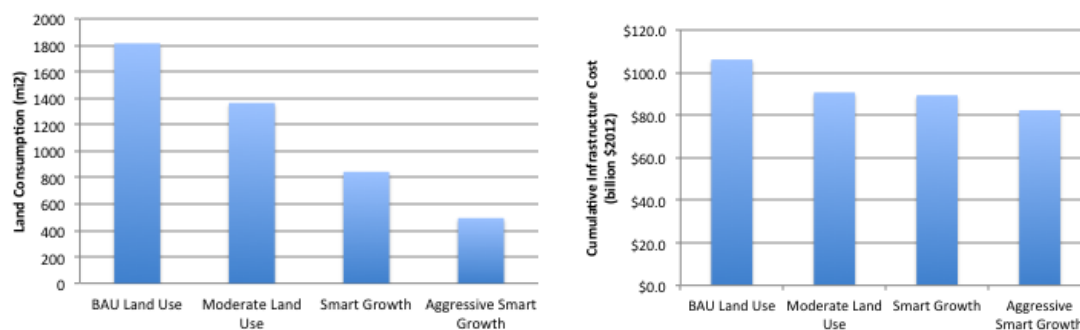
available resources. [Studies](#) show that land use decisions affect transportation demand, and are also correlated with electricity and water demand. Furthermore, local policies affect building decisions, energy efficiency, and the development of infrastructure.

Decisions made at the local level, for example, have a real impact on statewide greenhouse gas emissions, and also help to determine how vulnerable the community and the state will be in the face of a changing climate and alternatively, how resilient they can be by addressing their vulnerabilities.

In many cases, the impacts of these decisions can be measured. For instance, health, infrastructure, services and other costs associated with various land use patterns can be estimated using tools like [Urban Footprint](#). Measuring impacts and outcomes will enable communities to weigh costs and benefits of new development and grow in a manner that is consistent with community values.

Quantifying outcomes can provide meaningful contrasts for general plan development. For example, the graphs below show the aggregate impacts of development decisions on land consumption and infrastructure costs, statewide.¹

Figure 4: Land consumption and infrastructure costs increase with less dense development patterns



¹ These results are from analysis prepared by Calthorpe Associates for the state as a whole. Similar results have been prepared at a city and county level. The land use assumptions are based on current density patterns (BAU) and under increasingly dense development.

General Plan Basics

The City of Fresno engaged in a robust four-year process to update its [general plan](#), which focuses on encouraging new development within the existing footprint of the city. Citing past mistakes that left some neighborhoods behind and hoping to reverse the patterns of sprawl, the City used [Rapid Fire](#)- the predecessor to [Urban Footprint](#)- to engage the entire community in the visioning and creation of their new plan for future growth.



The general plan is intended to guide most planning decisions. Under state law, subdivisions, capital improvements, development agreements, and many other land use actions must be consistent with the adopted general plan. In counties and general law cities, zoning and specific plans are also required to conform to the general plan. In addition, preparing, adopting, implementing, and maintaining the general plan serves to:

- Identify the community's [land use](#), [circulation](#), [environmental](#), [economic](#), and [social](#) goals and policies as they relate to future growth and development.
- Provide a basis for local government decision-making, including decisions on development approvals and exactions.
- Provide citizens with opportunities to participate in the planning and decision-making processes of their communities.
- Inform citizens, developers, decision-makers, and other cities and counties of the ground rules that guide development within a particular community.

General Plan Elements

In statute, the general plan is presented as a collection of seven “elements,” or topic categories (see [§65302](#)). These topics and the issues embodied by each are briefly summarized below. Examples from cities and counties in the state are embedded in the GPG with links throughout the document.

- **Land Use**: designates the type, intensity, and general distribution of uses of land for housing, business, industry, open space, education, public buildings and grounds, waste disposal facilities, and other categories of public and private uses.
- **Circulation**: correlates with the land use element and identifies the general location and extent of existing and proposed major thoroughfares, transportation routes, terminals, and other local public utilities and facilities.

Placemaking and Urban Design

While the General Plan Land Use Map is two dimensional, placemaking takes land use policies into a three-dimensional realm by focusing on what a place will actually look like when it is built. Great districts, corridors, and sites contribute to the vitality and quality of life of a community from the placement of buildings, relationship of buildings to one another and public spaces, and the design and quality of sidewalks, open spaces, and other elements of the public realm.

Many communities address placemaking and urban design through an optional element such as an Urban Design Element. However, these policies can also be incorporated into a Land Use Element as urban form is closely related to the location, densities, and intensities of land uses. Urban design considers the relationship between land use and the image or character of the built environment with the ultimate goal of attaining a strong sense of place. Placemaking re-envision a community's assets, spaces, and surroundings and their relationships to each other. Using extensive public participation, placemaking attempts to create public spaces that are useful, attractive, and utilized extensively by the community, who consequently feel ownership and pride in the space.

This approach is applicable to many types of communities and can be especially meaningful in suburban contexts seeking to instill a stronger sense of place in sprawl environments and in areas focusing on infill development. Placemaking is also important to carefully plan for the public realm.

Several cities have taken varied approaches to incorporate urban design and placemaking into their general plans and land use elements.

- The City of Fullerton developed [The Fullerton Vision](#) to identify 12 distinct Focus Areas within which to concentrate potential change through community-led planning processes.
- The City of Sacramento's [Land Use and Urban Design](#) chapter focused on creating complete neighborhoods, distinct and memorable places, and excellence in the design of the city's form and structure through development standards and clear design direction.
- The City of Tracy used a [Community Character Element](#) in its General Plan to develop urban design principles including Human-Scale Design, Community Focal Points, and Visual Landmarks and Entryways.
- The City of Brea [Community Development Element](#) contains an Urban Design plan with policies for creating a sense of place and policies for creating connections. The plan also include a Public Realm Urban Design Palette which establishes direction for City-sponsored improvements of public property, including, city gateways, landscape corridors, neighborhood linkages, and public plazas.

- **Housing:** comprehensive assessment of current and projected housing needs for all economic segments of the community. In addition, the housing element embodies policies for providing adequate housing and includes action programs for that purpose. By statute, the housing element must be updated every four, five or eight years.
- **Conservation:** addresses the conservation, development, and use of natural resources, including water, forests, soils, rivers, and mineral deposits.
- **Open Space:** details plans and measures for the long-range preservation and conservation of open-space lands, including open space for the preservation of natural resources, the managed production of resources, agriculture, outdoor recreation, and public health and safety.
- **Noise:** identifies and appraises noise problems within the community and forms the basis for land use distribution.
- **Safety:** establishes policies and programs to protect the community from risks associated with seismic, geologic, flood, and wildfire hazards, as well as other concerns such as drought.
- **Air Quality:** establishes policies and programs to reduce impacts to air quality in the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. Air quality is an optional element in other areas of the state.
- **Other optional elements, identified by community:** [health](#), [equity](#), [community development](#), water, and [resiliency](#) are some examples of additional elements that can be added to general plans or used to frame general plans.

The level of discussion given to each issue in the general plan depends upon local conditions and the relative local importance of that issue. When a city or county determines that an issue specified in the law is not locally relevant, the general plan may briefly discuss the reason for that decision but does not otherwise have to address that issue ([§65301](#)). A jurisdiction may choose to combine elements if most appropriate for local context.

A local general plan may also include other topics of local interest. In addition to the mandatory elements, a city or county may adopt any other elements that relate to its physical development ([§65303](#)).

Once adopted, these optional elements become an integral part of the general plan with the same force and effect as the mandatory elements. Accordingly, zoning, subdivisions, public works, specific plans, and other actions that must be consistent with the general plan must also be consistent with any optional elements. Likewise, the practice of developing stand-alone climate action, adaptation, or emissions reduction plans, if properly linked to the general plan, must also be internally consistent if used to support or augment policy, programs and implementation associated with the general plan.

Common topics for optional elements include [air quality](#), [climate change](#), [capital improvements](#), [community design](#), [healthy communities](#), [economic development](#), [energy](#), [parks and recreation](#), [water](#), and [watershed planning](#). Depending upon the format a jurisdiction decides to use for its general plan, these topics may also be cross cutting themes, addressing required and optional elements throughout each chosen section.

An optional element may clarify how a local government exercises its police powers- and in some instances, can expand a local government's authority. In a more common situation, an optional element will indicate how a local government will apply its existing police power or other authority. For example, a historic preservation element may lay the foundation for historic district regulations or participation in the California Main Street Program, or a strategic fire prevention planning element could identify wildfire hazard areas, control new development within those areas, and provide the basis for zoning, subdivision, and brush clearance ordinances intended to minimize fire hazards.

In the statutory descriptions of the elements, a number of issues appear in more than one element. In order to minimize redundancies or internal conflicts in the general plan, combining elements or organizing the plan by issue often makes practical sense. This idea is explored further in [Chapter 1](#).

There are a number of state and federal laws, such as [AB 857](#), the [Surface Mining and Reclamation Act](#), the [Endangered Species Act](#), and others, that can affect the content of the general plan. These are discussed in detail throughout these guidelines.

Criteria for the General Plan

General Plan criteria must include comprehensiveness, internal consistency, and long-term perspective, which are discussed below.

Comprehensiveness

Every city and county must adopt “a comprehensive, long term general plan” ([§65300](#)). The general plan must cover a local jurisdiction’s entire planning area and address the broad range of issues associated with a city’s or county’s development. Providing linkages to regional plans may also be included– incorporating regional policy and context where appropriate.

Geographic Comprehensiveness

The plan must cover the territory within the boundaries of the adopting city or county as well as “any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency’s judgment bears relation to its planning” ([§65300](#)). For cities, this means all territory within the city limits, both public and private. Counties must address all unincorporated areas.

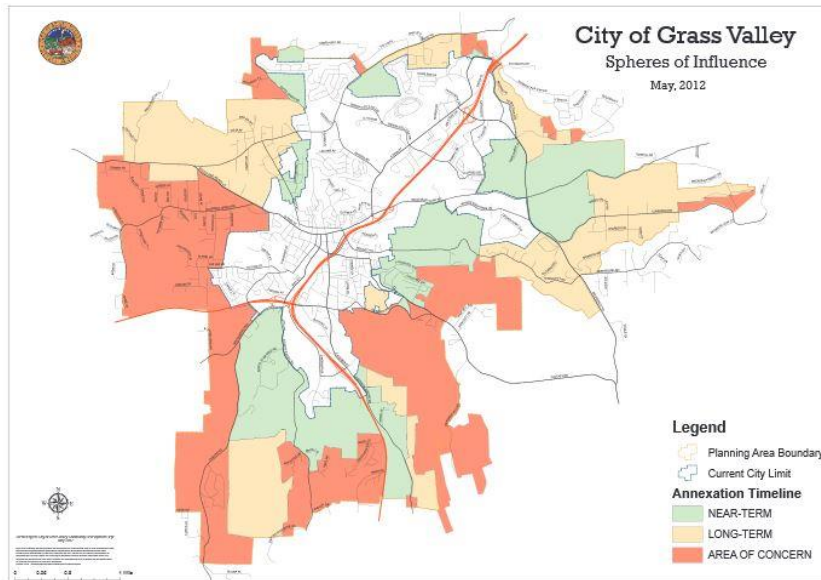
When establishing its planning area, each city should consider using its sphere of influence as a starting point, then building off of that area based on factors such as its location in a [watershed](#). The Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) in every county adopts a sphere of influence for each city to represent “the probable physical boundaries and service area” of that city ([§56076](#)). Although there is no direct requirement that the sphere and the planning area match, the former provides a convenient measure of the city’s region of interest.

A county should consider the general plans of every city within the county and adjacent jurisdictions in its own plans, even if they are in a different county.

In addition, since issues are not confined to political boundaries, the law provides for planning outside of the jurisdiction’s territory. Cooperative extraterritorial planning can be used to manage groundwater resources; guide appropriate development within specific geographic context (such as areas that may be affected by [sea level rise](#) as a result of [climate change](#)) and the orderly and efficient extension of services and utilities; ensure the

preservation of open space, agriculture, and resource conservation lands; and establish consistent standards for development in the plans of adjoining jurisdictions.

Figure 5: Map Showing Spheres of Influence for Grass Valley, CA (www.cityofgrassvalley.com/content/maps/sphere-influence-map)



Cities and counties should work together to delineate planning areas and may establish formal agreements for processing development proposals. As urbanization occurs and adjoining cities expand, the potential for conflict between cities competing for the same lands increases. Intercity cooperation in establishing planning areas can proactively help to avoid such disputes and avoid additional costs.

Regional Context

Viewing the local general plan in its regional context is important. Traditionally, the concept of “community” encompassed only a local entity—the city or county. With the growing interdependence of local governments, joint planning and procurement and important issues that transcend local boundaries such as transportation, provision of energy, climate change, air quality, water supply and management, and floodplain and flood risk management, the regional perspective should be considered. Cities and counties should coordinate plans regionally when possible and appropriate, for example to identify risks from natural hazards and [climate change](#) and opportunities for integrated resource management that extend across jurisdictional boundaries. Using any [available data](#)--such as

watershed-based floodplain management, [mapped earthquake faults](#) or high [fire-hazard areas](#), integrated water management plans, [and new requirements for [sustainable groundwater management](#) plans] [sustainable community strategies](#), [hazard mitigation plans](#), local coastal programs and other planning documents-- will improve planning and expand opportunities. Each local planning agency should coordinate its general plan with regional planning efforts as much as possible. This GPG update provides [tools](#) to make this easier. The general plan process provides local jurisdictions with the opportunity to integrate across the requirements and opportunities provided by multiple regional documents and initiatives.

The Legislature has mandated consideration of certain regional impacts, such as regional housing needs, in the general plan. Local general plans should recognize the city or county's [regional role](#) if regional needs are to be satisfied, federal and state standards met, and coordination achieved in the location of public facilities. Accordingly, general plans [should include](#) a discussion of the extent to which the general plan's policies, standards, and proposals correspond to regional plans and the plans of adjoining communities. A city or county may need to reexamine its own general plan when its neighbors make important changes to their plans.

Issue Comprehensiveness

While a general plan must address a broad range of issues, the plan should focus on those issues that are relevant to the planning area ([§65301\(c\)](#)). The plan must address the jurisdiction's physical development, such as general locations, appropriate mix, timing, and extent of land uses and supporting infrastructure. The broad scope of physical development issues may range from appropriate areas for building factories to open space for preserving endangered species (see [Chapter 4](#) for examples). This may include not only those issues described in the planning statutes, but regional issues as well.

Land use decisions have physical and environmental impacts, but also social and economic consequences, especially for vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. Recognizing these concerns in the general plan can help cities and counties plan for or mitigate them. Social and economic issues may be discussed within the context of the mandatory elements, such as [housing](#) and [land use](#), or in additional optional elements such as [environmental justice](#), [economic development](#), or [community health](#). Both methods are discussed in the GPG.

Internal Consistency

Internal consistency requires that no policy conflicts can exist, either textual or diagrammatic, between the components of an otherwise complete and adequate general plan including internally referenced external documents like a climate action plan or local energy assurance plan ([§ 65300.5](#)). Different policies must be balanced and reconciled within the plan. The internal consistency requirement has five dimensions, described below.

“In construing the provisions of this article the Legislature intends that the general plan and elements are parts thereof comprise an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policies of the adopting agency.” ([Section 65300.5](#))

Equal Status Among Elements

All elements of the general plan have equal legal status. For example, in [Sierra Club v. Board of Supervisors of Kern County \(1981\) 126 Cal.App.3d 698](#), two of Kern County's general plan elements, land use and open space, designated conflicting land uses for the same property. A provision in the general plan text reconciled this and other map inconsistencies by stating that “if in any instance there is a conflict between the land use element and the open space element, the land use element controls.” The court of appeal struck down this clause because it violated the internal consistency requirement under [§65300.5](#). No element is legally subordinate to another; the general plan must resolve potential conflicts among the elements through clear language and policy consistency.

Consistency Between Elements

All elements of a general plan, whether mandatory or optional, must be consistent with one another. In [Concerned Citizens of Calaveras County v. Board of Supervisors \(1985\) 166 Cal.App.3d 90](#), the county land use element contained proposals expected to result in increased population. The circulation element, however, failed to provide feasible remedies for the predicted traffic congestion that would follow. The county simply stated that it would lobby for funds to solve the future traffic problems. The court held that this vague response was insufficient to reconcile the conflicts.

[Housing element](#) law requires local agencies to adopt housing element programs that achieve the goals and implement the policies of the housing element. The element must

identify the means by which consistency will be achieved and maintained with other general plan elements [\(§65583\(c\)\)](#), including [land use](#).

A city or county may incorporate by reference into its general plan all or a portion of another jurisdiction's plan, a regional plan, or its own plan, such as a climate action plan. When doing so, the city or county should make sure that any materials incorporated by reference are consistent with the rest of its general plan.

Consistency Within Elements

Each element's data, analyses, goals, policies, and implementation programs must be consistent with and complement one another. Established goals, data, and analysis form the foundation for any ensuing policies. For example, if one portion of a circulation element indicates that county roads are sufficient to accommodate the projected level of traffic while another section of the same element describes a worsening traffic situation aggravated by continued subdivision activity, the element is not internally consistent ([Concerned Citizens of Calaveras County v. Board of Supervisors \(1985\) 166 Cal.App.3d 90](#)).

Area Plan Consistency

All principles, goals, objectives, policies, and plan proposals set forth in an area or community plan must be consistent with the overall general plan.

The general plan should explicitly discuss the role of area plans if they are to be used. Similarly, each area plan should discuss its specific relationship to the general plan.

Climate Action Plans and airport land use compatibility plans, where appropriate, should also be consistent with the general plan. Climate Action Plans can be created concurrently with or closely following a general plan update. However, if a local agency's resources do not allow for concurrent preparation of a general plan update and the climate action plan, general plans may be amended later to integrate all or part of the climate action plan.

Text and Diagram Consistency

The general plan's text and its accompanying diagrams and maps are integral parts of the plan. They must be in agreement. For example, a conflict exists if a general plan's land use element diagram designates low-density residential development in an area where the text

describes the presence of prime agricultural land and written policies to preserve agricultural land or open space. The plan's text and diagrams must be reconciled, because "internal consistency requires that general plan diagrams of land use, circulation systems, open-space and natural resources areas reflect written policies and programs in the text for each element." (*Curtin's California Land-Use and Planning Law*, 1998 edition, p. 18)

Long-Term Perspective

Since the general plan affects the welfare of current and future generations, state law requires that the plan take a long-term perspective ([§65300](#)). The general plan projects conditions and needs into the future as a basis for determining objectives. It also establishes long-term policy for day-to-day decision-making based upon those objectives.

The time frames for effective planning vary among issues. The housing element, for example, specifically involves time increments of four, five, or eight years. Sewer, water, and road systems are generally designed with a 30- to 50-year lifespan. Capital improvement planning is typically based upon a five- or seven-year term. Economic trends may change rapidly in response to outside forces. Climate change is affecting local governments now, but longer term planning should anticipate the significant changes in the environmental setting associated with a changing climate as indicated by [best available science](#).

Differences in time frame also affect the formulation of general plan goals, objectives, policies, and implementation measures. Goals and objectives are longer term, specific policies shorter in their outcomes, and implementation programs the shortest span because they must quickly respond to the demands of new funding sources, the results of their own activities, and the jurisdiction's immediate needs and problems.

Most jurisdictions have selected 20 years as the horizon year for the general plan. The horizon does not mark an end point, but rather provides a general context in which to make shorter-term decisions. The local jurisdiction may choose a time horizon that serves its particular needs including horizon years further out to address long term issues like [climate change](#) and [land use](#). Planning is a continuous process; the general plan should be reviewed regularly, regardless of its horizon, and revised as new information becomes available and as community needs and values change. With easier access to [data](#), cities and counties have the opportunity to evaluate their general plans more often, link directly to responsible

agencies, or monitor their process through data analysis or public dashboards. [The City of Sacramento](#), for example, conducts annual reviews of their general plan as well as five year updates to the document based on the annual assessments. These regular reviews and updates reduce the potential cost of a comprehensive rewriting of their general plan, while keeping it timely and relevant to community needs.

Considerations for General Plans

Area Plans, Community Plans, and Specific Plans

Area and community plans are part of the general plan. A specific plan, on the other hand, is a tool for implementing the general plan but is not part of the general plan. The following paragraphs look briefly at each of these types of plans. In addition to consistency between plans, general plans must also be consistent with airport land use compatibility plans in specified regions, unless overridden by a two thirds vote of the local government, pursuant to [Public Utilities Code §21676](#).

“Area plan” and “community plan” are terms for plans that focus on a particular region or community within the overall general plan area. An area or community plan is adopted by resolution as an amendment to the general plan, in the manner set out in [§65350](#), et seq. It refines the policies of the general plan as they apply to a smaller geographic area and is implemented by ordinances and other discretionary actions, such as zoning. The area or community plan process also provides a forum for resolving local conflicts. These plans are commonly used in large cities and counties where there are a variety of distinct communities or regions.

As discussed earlier, an area or community plan must be internally consistent with the general plan of which it is a part. To facilitate such consistency, the general plan should provide a policy framework for the detailed treatment of specific issues in the various area or community plans. Ideally, to simplify implementation, the area or community plans and the general plan should share a uniform format for land use categories, terminology, and diagrams.

Each area or community plan need not address all of the issues identified by [§65302](#) when the overall general plan satisfies these requirements. For example, an area or community plan need not discuss fire safety if the jurisdiction-wide plan adequately addresses the subject and the area or community plan is consistent with those policies and standards. While an area or community plan may provide greater detail to policies affecting development in a defined area, adopting one or a series of such plans does not substitute for regular updates to the general plan. Many of the mandatory general plan issues are most effectively addressed on a jurisdiction-wide basis that ties together the policies of the individual area or community plans.

A specific plan is a hybrid that can combine policy statements with development regulations ([§65450](#), et seq.). It can be used to address the development requirements for a single project such as urban [infill](#) or a planned community. As a result, its emphasis is on concrete standards and development criteria. Its text and diagrams will address the planning of necessary infrastructure and facilities, as well as land uses and open space. In addition, it will specify those programs and regulations necessary to finance infrastructure and public works projects. A specific plan may be adopted either by resolution, like a general plan, or by ordinance, like zoning.

Specific plans must be consistent with all facets of the general plan, including the policy statements. In turn, zoning, subdivisions, and public works projects must be consistent with the specific plan ([§65455](#)). Once a specific plan has been adopted, later projects may not require additional review under [CEQA](#). The publication [A Planner's Guide to Specific Plans](#), by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR), provides further information on relationships between plans.

Adoption of Another Jurisdiction's General Plan and Joint Adoption

A city or county may adopt all or a portion of the general plan of another public agency ([§65301\(a\)](#)). Additionally, [§65302\(g\)](#) specifically provides that a city may adopt the county's safety element if the county's element "is sufficiently detailed containing appropriate policies and programs for adoption by a city." One of the benefits of this approach is that it eliminates duplication of effort in collecting data for the more technical elements.

A city and county may jointly prepare and separately adopt a general plan or individual elements. A city or county may adopt part or all of a functional plan such as a regional transportation plan, climate action plan or sustainable community strategy prepared by a special district, regional planning agency, or some other public agency.

Although joint adoption of another jurisdiction's plan or elements may be advantageous, a city or county remains solely responsible for the legal adequacy of its general plan. The other jurisdiction's plan and elements or the jointly prepared plan and elements must be sufficiently detailed to address the concerns of the adopting agency and to provide adequate coverage of the issues required in the Government Code. A plan or element that is jointly prepared or adopted from another jurisdiction's general plan has the same legal standing as the rest of the adopting agency's general plan and internal consistency requirements continue to apply. Similarly, discretionary zoning, subdivision, and capital improvement project decisions must be consistent with the joint plan or element.

Despite options such as adopting another jurisdiction's general plan or joint adoption between multiple agencies, each adopting agency must retain its sole and independent authority to make amendments to its general plan unless a joint powers agreement has been approved. In [*Alameda County Land Use Association c. City of Hayward \(1995\) 38 Cal.App.4th 1716*](#), the appellate court overturned a memorandum of understanding (MOU) adopted by Alameda County and the cities of Hayward and Pleasanton to specify general plan goals and policies regarding the "Ridgelands Area." The MOU provided that any amendment to the applicable sections by one jurisdiction would not be effective unless "parallel amendments" were approved by the other two. The court held this arrangement to be an impermissible divestment of the police power, restricting the individual agencies' legislative authority to amend their general plans.

Chapter 3: Public Engagement and Outreach

Designing Healthy, Equitable, Resilient, and Economically Vibrant Places

"Cities (and counties) have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody."

--Jane Jacobs

Introduction

Robust community engagement is a vital component of drafting and updating a general plan. When a general plan is written or amended, state law requires the planning agency to "provide opportunities for the involvement of citizens, California Native American Indian tribes, public agencies, public utility companies, and civic, education, and other community groups," which may include public agencies, public utility companies, community groups, and others through hearings or other appropriate methods ([§65351](#)). The law also requires that a jurisdiction make a diligent effort to include all economic groups when drafting, adopting and implementing its housing element ([§65583](#)). For the purposes of this chapter, the term "update" will refer to adopting new general plans as well as updating existing ones.

By law, cities and counties must hold at least two public hearings before adopting a general plan: one by the planning commission and another by the legislative body (either the city council or the board of supervisors) ([§65353](#), [65355](#)). However, this minimal number of hearings does not constitute what most planners would consider an adequate public participation program for adopting or updating a general plan.

As mentioned throughout the GPG, there is great opportunity to collaborate in innovative ways with different public agencies, private entities, elected officials, and community members. A general plan update affects every aspect of a community and broad participation is important- particularly direct or representative participation of local citizens.

Many entities have recognized the benefits of strong community engagement to improve local conditions, inform policy, enhance equity, and result in better program outcomes.ⁱ

Creating the opportunity for community dialogue throughout the general plan update- although challenging- can result in a much more informed and widely embraced plan.

As stated in Chapter 2, a general plan should start with a community's vision, but community engagement should not stop there. The general plan update must be treated attentively throughout the process from the beginning stages of the visioning process to adoption, depending on the scope and extent of the project. A thorough update for an average-sized city is typically at least a year-long endeavor. The nature and intended outcomes during the outreach process will be different depending on the stage of the update:

1. **Exploration:** The initial stages of outreach allow stakeholders to identify community strengths, assets, priorities for future development, areas for improvement, and start the process of formulating a vision for the future.
2. **Collaborative Action:** After a general baseline of community goals is established, the next phase allows for collaborative engagement with partners regarding different options for consideration, and how the policy priorities align to move toward attaining the future vision.
3. **Decision Making:** During the later stages of an update, various policy priorities have emerged to achieve the intended general plan vision, and it becomes paramount to orient policy options into a framework and select priority policies to move forward with the draft plan.

This chapter discusses various issues planning departments can consider when designing a public engagement process. It also provides tools and lists resources to inform the outreach process and ensure community involvement, input, and support for the general plan.

Innovating for Sustainable Communities

US Department of Housing and Urban Development

Collective Impact is an engagement model that multiple sectors can use to achieve positive change that is composed of strategies aimed at improving difficult social, economic, and environmental problems. At its core, it recognizes the importance of cross-sector collaboration, as well as bringing private, public, and citizen partners together to achieve meaningful outcomes. Core strategies include, “building a common agenda, creating shared measurement systems, identifying mutually reinforcing activities, promoting continuous communications, and supporting backbone organizations.” City and county planning departments around the US implemented this strategy at a time of significant fiscal constraint during the economic downturn in 2008 as part of the [Partnership for Sustainable Communities](#) with the [Department of Transportation, Housing and Urban Development](#), and [Environmental Protection Agency](#).

Through broad public engagement, co-learning, and leveraging financial resources many lessons resulted and highlighted the power of long-range planning to improve economic resilience, integrate equity into planning, and foster collaboration with new entities- such as health and arts to achieve sustainable communities.

A vision at the beginning of the planning process is vital to frame the planning priorities and implementation plan. These lessons are applicable to establishing a vision in a General Plan Update.

http://www.frbsf.org/community-development/files/ci_vol26no1-The-Sustainable-Communities-Initiative.pdf

Process Design

Designing the outreach process before starting a general plan update is helpful to ensure adequate input from various stakeholders. In addition to any organized participation activities, state law allows the public to attend all meetings of appointed advisory committees, planning commissions, and local legislative bodies, with a few exceptions ([Brown Act, §54950](#), et seq.). Unexpected events can occur during an update, including changes in elected leadership, funding, staff, etc. Having an outreach plan in place will help keep the process on track. This section provides guidance for developing an outreach plan.

Establish an outreach strategy

A road map is an important tool to plan public engagement efforts throughout the process. Local jurisdictions vary tremendously throughout California, and engagement strategies will

also vary based on local circumstances. Local communities should help define the outreach strategy most relevant to their needs. However, there are some issues to consider across planning for all areas.

These include:

- Funding available for engagement activities
- Timeline for activities
- Expectation-setting for stakeholders
- Staff time and knowledge and other expertise to conduct outreach and education
- Communication tools available
- Process to ensure efforts are transparent, accessible, and fun
- Methods available to capture and record the dialogue
- Translation services
- Variety of meeting spaces

Some helpful tools in outreach include:

Oversight responsibility

Assigning a staff member to oversee and be responsible for the engagement and outreach process will ensure dedicated attention to this important procedural step.

Advisory Committee/Board

Establishing a [diverse advisory board](#) comprised of experts as well as community members to serve as advisors throughout the general plan update can be helpful by providing insight on how to reach multiple populations, addressing potentially controversial issues, understanding sensitive community needs, and representing a greater portion of the community. A manageable size board (<20 people) should include multiple voices from the community. General plan advisory board members represent the varied interests the public engagement process hopes to capture, and should be drawn from the same communities that general outreach will target.

The following categories of advisory board members should be considered:

- Business leaders and/or representatives from Chambers of Commerce

- Local agency leaders including water agencies, fire departments, health officers, public works leads, and others
- Community development and health leaders
- Representatives and advocates from various income groups, special needs populations and neighborhoods in the jurisdiction
- Multi-lingual representatives
- State and/or federal agency leaders if the jurisdiction has a high proportion of public lands

Survey of overlapping efforts

Multiple public engagement processes may be in process simultaneously. For instance, outreach to solicit input on an application for grant funding may occur at the same time as outreach to update the general plan. This can confuse participants, and pose a potential challenge for recruitment and involvement. Additionally, other public or private agencies (for example, Parks and Recreation, Hospitals, Departments of Public Health, Non-Governmental Organizations) may be conducting outreach simultaneously. Increased awareness of ongoing efforts to gain input can help avoid overlapping or conflicting outreach efforts and might even allow outreach sessions to be combined.

Scale

Outreach for a county general plan is a much larger undertaking than for a city, due to the larger catchment area. Also, stakeholders may have less of a perceived stake in the process since county general planning is further removed from their local jurisdiction. Relating the importance of participation back to the group and sharing how the information will be incorporated into the planning process can help increase participation.

Partnership

All affected stakeholders should be represented in any public participation process. In a general plan process, this is the entire community. Stakeholder groups in the general plan process may include:

- Community and neighborhood groups
- School districts
- County Transportation Commissions

- Utility and public service providers
 - Energy
 - Water: water supply, wastewater, flood/stormwater districts, IRWM, Sustainable Groundwater Agency, reclamation district, etc.
 - Telecommunications
 - Waste
- Regional groups that can identify synergies with other regional efforts
- Affordable housing and special needs population representatives and advocates
- Non-profit and for-profit builders
- State and federal partners as appropriate
- Educational institutions
- Industry and business
- Civic and community service organizations
- Non-governmental organizations
- Religious communities
- Existing boards and commissions, such as planning boards, parks and recreation, etc.
- Other public agencies
- Topical experts:
 - Groups working on climate change
 - County Health Departments
 - Environmental justice groups
 - Tribal leaders
 - Innovation or Technology Officers
 - Local food sources
 - Agricultural community members

Cultural Considerations

Cultural differences can be present between and among professional groups as well as between and among community members. Reaching out to different professional groups and organizations not traditionally involved in planning occasionally presents its own set of challenges. It is important to account for different interaction norms, priorities, levels of comfort with professional terminology, and expectations for project completion.

It is important to consider cultural considerations throughout the design of community engagement, including overt differences such as literacy level, socioeconomic status, and language, as well as nuanced differences such as local history and cultural norms. Designing a process that is sensitive to all of these considerations can help encourage broader, more equitable and informed participation.

To ensure equitable outreach, the following factors should be considered:

Literacy Level: It may be more difficult to reach out to foreign-born community members or groups with a lower level of formal education using written materials. It is important to design outreach materials and events to accommodate different literacy levels as well as provide background information when necessary if referring to complex concepts.

Socioeconomic Status: Lower economic groups are often disproportionately affected by environmental hazards, but also face more barriers to participation in community engagement efforts to help remediate them. Factors such as location and accessibility by public transportation, timing of outreach, availability of childcare, and availability of food can affect the ability of groups to attend events. Reviewing demographic data, such as available in the [American Community Survey \(ACS\)](#), can help identify potential needs of each community.

Language: All communication should be done in all of the major² languages spoken in the community. This includes any advertising and written background materials as well as live translation at key public events. Some documents, such as the draft general plan or the draft environmental impact report associated with the general plan, may be infeasible to translate in their entirety. In such cases, the planning agency should consider translating an executive summary into the major languages spoken in the community. Translators should be available at meetings when it is clear that non-English speaking members of the community will be present. Many local

² The definition of "major" varies. Some agencies define a major language as 10% or more of the population speaks the language.

non-profit organizations can provide minimal or low cost translation services for public benefit effort.

Age: Aging populations have specific needs and it is important to capture their input in the outreach process. Considering time of day and location of events, as well as ADA access to events and services available at the locations is important in including elderly residents. The needs of young residents must also be considered, including outreach methods such as social media and online platforms, location access and amenities, and innovative tools for discussion at events.

Local History: Certain communities may have participated in previous outreach efforts that did not result in change. Over time, either not being included or participating and not feeling like the input was utilized can affect future participation. Understanding the local context is helpful prior to beginning outreach. Establishing trust, which also can happen through partnership at the local level, can make the process more likely to foster dialogue.

Cultural Norms: California is rich in diversity. Each city and county across the state is comprised of different ethnic groups from around the world. From 1980-2010, the percentage of people of color, for example, increased from 33.4 percent to 59.8 percent of the [population](#). By 2040, 73.3 percent of the population will be other than Caucasian. Some members come from groups that are not as familiar with democracy, the ability to openly share opinions, are used to different gender roles, or may be fearful to have conversations and dialogue recorded. It is hard to learn all of the cultural nuances for each group in the community, but working in partnership with local non-profits or other groups skilled at working across cultures can help ensure all groups are able to participate in a way that is participatory for them.

Outreach Structure

Community members and other stakeholders have many competing interests for their time. Allowing different levels and types of involvement into the process can help foster participation. For example, going to places where people already gather such as a community health or street fair, a cultural event, a public event at a local religious or community center, community event at a local school, etc, might allow attendees to share input without a large time commitment. This is an especially helpful mode of outreach when looking for feedback on specific topics, such as [health](#), [equity](#), and [environmental justice](#). Meeting stakeholders in locations they are familiar and comfortable with can help to bridge cultural and trust gaps. Other more time intensive activities such as focus groups, charettes, and workshops can be available for stakeholders who are interested in providing more in-depth input. The structure of the outreach strategy can also influence the transparency and continued communication throughout the process. Ongoing information sharing can help maintain community relationships and build trust in the process especially if culturally appropriate communication methods are used. Web-based communications, for example, may exclude stakeholder groups without regular access to the internet.

Data

Data and data visualizations can be powerful tools to catalyze community engagement. Some local jurisdictions have used maps with geospatial data and charts to examine [transit routes](#), [map community assets and risks](#), or share [health outcome information](#) to allow community members to understand planning in a tangible context. Data presentations should be tailored to their specific audience. For instance, some members might want to know much more about how the data is collected and specific details. Other stakeholder groups will be more interested in general associations and how the data fits into the process. Missing data must be considered alongside existing data. Including funds in the budget to collect data as the general plan process proceeds will help address identified gaps in data availability.

There are also methods to allow local citizens to collect data which can help make engagement more interesting as well as provide local data sets. Tools such as [walk audits](#), surveys of

[Next Door](#) is an online neighborhood social networking website founded in 2010. It is currently used by 1 in 3 neighborhoods across the US.

Established to provide a social media platform for neighbors, it has also been used by city governments to do outreach on community building events, public participation opportunities and public outreach. It is one of many potential online tools to help with a general plan update.

building types, and [community photos](#) help with the visioning process for community improvement while increasing potential participation. Considering how this data is valued versus other data sets and sources-such as traditional data purchased from consultants-including how much weight it will carry in the process and how public contributors will be incorporated help ensure improved community data and input.

On the horizon

As technology has advanced in the private sector, people have become accustomed to using the internet and their personal cell phones to locate services, buy products, fund a project through crowd sourcing, and share their life on social media. This constant and immediate interaction is changing the cultural norms for level of involvement with business, other community members, and ultimately with government agencies. Groups such as [Code for America](#) build open source technology to improve access to government services.ⁱⁱ Some places are starting to use personal cell phones to do [surveys of local conditions](#), tweet [responses to proposed policy options](#), or even provide their commentary online for local city council meetings rather than participate in person. These innovations within local government are increasingly common. As more local jurisdictions create Civic Innovation Officer positions to facilitate new ways of interacting with local government, planning departments as well will likely have new opportunities for engagement. As potential methods of engagement increase, jurisdictions should consider possible age and cultural differences in the rate of adoption of new technology and plan accordingly.

Engagement Tools

There are a wide variety of engagement tools that can be used to inform and engage the community in a public participation process. Tools should be chosen based on the needs, strengths, and resources of the community. By using multiple techniques, a wide range of community residents may be reached. Community members who help develop the general plan will often become champions throughout the process, helping carry the plan through adoption and implementation. Below are examples of different tools that may be employed.

Web Based Meeting and Engagement Tools

Webinars, online conferences, and internet collaboration tools allow for easy, convenient engagement with the public. People with busy schedules, families, or limited mobility may find participation simpler via web based tools, entering questions or comments based on their own availability. Web based tools range from simple online webinars or meetings to open forums, documents with commenting capability, and collaborative images for visioning. While some community members may not have access or interest in using online tools, including them in an engagement strategy may increase participation.

Mailings- emailed or regular mail

Mailings can be used to advertise process, request input, or share information. Note that some notices must be mailed ([§ 65091, 65092](#)). The types of mailing used should be based on the goals sought to accomplish. Mass surveys or opinion mailings work well to broaden the range of participants in the process and can also share information about process scope, timelines, website links, data availability and issues. Newsletters work to keep the public updated on the progress of the process as well. Some communities utilize existing mailing services such as utility bills to reduce costs.

Surveys

Surveys are most often used in the beginning of a general plan process to help [identify community issues](#) and concerns and [to identify residents' opinions](#) about the strengths and weaknesses of their community. A survey can help identify issues to be addressed by the general plan and areas where residents would like more information. A good survey includes the public early on in the process, broadens the range of those involved by including residents who do not come to meetings, and publicizes the general plan process. A statistically valid survey, while more difficult to conduct, can be very persuasive to decisions-makers and the public. Including [demographic](#) questions in a survey will help identify any inequities in response rates.

There are a number of methods available to improve access and equity in surveys. Pilot testing the survey instrument with the advisory group or a diverse group of pilot subjects may solicit feedback to improve the form. The survey should be piloted in every language in which it will be ultimately offered, to ensure that translations are conveying the intended information. While this will add time to the process, it may ultimately improve public perception of the data collected.

Additionally, soliciting feedback on data interpretation may be useful before finalizing analysis. Because different interests may interpret the same data in multiple ways, providing an opportunity for discussion, feedback, and suggestions on how to analyze results may provide a stronger sense of transparency and trust in the process.

Meeting, Workshops, and Events

Well-timed meetings help solicit input and keep participants informed. Meeting types can vary depending on purpose, participants, and a variety of other factors. In addition to regular meeting structures, project leads can include innovative methods such as story telling, games, and white board/paper activities to capture input. Meeting types include:

- Public hearings
- Town hall meetings
- Open houses
- Events in non-traditional places, such as farmer's markets, churches, health fairs, school events, and community fairs
- Panel discussions
- Neighborhood meetings
- Civic meetings such as chamber of commerce
- Focus groups
- Small in-home meetings

Activities

Activities are a helpful tool to expand thinking and demonstrate new opportunities and possibilities. For example, engaging in a group walk and conducting a walk audit (where

local residents physically walk around and collect standardized information about the condition of the built environment) could highlight infrastructure and safety needs. Activities can also provide group-learning opportunities and build relationships with community members and planning and consulting staff.

Tours

Tours to other municipalities can show decision-makers and participants examples from other communities and help them visualize ideas for their own community, it is also a good way to experience parts of the city they may be less familiar with. Organized tours of recent or proposed projects within the community may also provide a good basis of discussion for decision-makers and participants.

Open Houses

Open houses can allow community members to view plan proposals, data, and maps in a casual environment that also allows people to come and go as their schedules allow. Open houses can be held at a church, school, community center, local business, or other location easily accessible to the public. Planners should be available to talk informally about the planning process with visitors. Translators should be present as available. Open houses can be combined with other tools, such as written or visual surveys.

The visioning process for [Downtown Salinas](#) started in December of 2008, through a collaborative public process to develop a consensus plan with the City. Multiple stakeholder and public meetings culminated in a design charrette, engaging the community to identify issues in multiple areas, including safety and security, transportation and traffic, and open space.

Community Image Surveys ([Photo voice](#)) and Taking pictures

Photos can accomplish the same thing as tours but work for larger groups and take less time. These surveys usually consist of pictures of civic buildings, housing, streets, and design elements that participants rate based on what they like and feel would work in their community.

Design Charrettes

Design charrettes are also more interactive and visual. The public can participate with interdisciplinary teams of planners, architects, engineers, and artists or other local citizens. While charrettes are often used for specific plans and individual projects, they can also help

community members visualize what they want their community to look like. These preferences can then be translated into general plan goals and specifications. For more information on charrettes visit www.charretteinstitute.org/.

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Chapter 4: Required Elements

Designing Healthy, Equitable, Resilient, and Economically Vibrant Places

"There is no logic that can be superimposed on the city; people make it, and it is to them, not buildings, that we must fit our plans."

— Jane Jacobs

"A city (or county) is not an accident but the result of coherent visions and aims."

— Leon Krier, *The Architecture of Community*

Introduction

All statutory references are to the California Government Code unless otherwise noted.

While a general plan will contain the community vision for future growth, California law also requires a general plan to address each of the seven mandated elements listed in [Government Code section 65302](#) to the extent locally relevant. The mandatory elements are land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. Cities and counties in the San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District must also address air quality in their general plans. The purpose of the following sections is to outline the content of each element as required by statute.

Relationships Among Elements and Issues



















































Each of the mandatory elements is presented separately in this chapter; however there is no requirement that a general plan be organized in seven separate elements. Consideration of local context and innovation is highly recommended in general plan preparation. A jurisdiction may organize its general plan in any format, including consolidated elements, so long as all of the relevant statutory issues are addressed. [Gov. Code § 65301](#); [Kings County Farm Bureau v. City of Hanford \(1990\) 221 Cal.App.3d 692](#). Indeed, the statutory elements call for interrelated content. For example, consideration given in the [conservation element](#) to the vegetation that supports an endangered wildlife species also involves analyzing topography, weather, fire hazards, availability of water, and density of development in several other elements. The table on the following page illustrates the potential relationships among the seven mandatory elements and the required topics of the general plan. Not

every general plan will address these issues to the same extent or in the same manner. Cities and counties should design their general plan formats to suit the topographic, geologic, climatologic, political, socioeconomic, cultural, and historical diversities that exist within their communities. Each section in the GPG will also highlight the relationships between the elements individually.

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Draft

Topics, Elements Document	<u>Land Use</u>	<u>Circulation</u>	<u>Housing</u>	<u>Conservation</u>	<u>Open Space</u>	<u>Noise</u>	<u>Safety</u>
<i>Agriculture</i>	●		■	■	●	■	
<i>Air Quality</i>	■	■	■		●		
<i>Airports</i>	●	■	■		■	●	
<i>Bicycle and Pedestrian Routes</i>	■	●	■		■		■
<i>Business</i>	●	■	■				■
<i>Climate Change (Adaptation)</i>	■	■	■	■	■		■
<i>Climate Change (GHG Emissions)</i>	■	■	■	■	■		■
<i>Density</i>	●	■	●	■	■	■	■
<i>Economic Development</i>	■	■	■				■
<i>Education</i>	●	■	■			■	■
<i>Equity/ Environmental Justice</i>	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
<i>Fire</i>	■		■		●		●
<i>Fisheries</i>				●	●		
<i>Flooding</i>	●		●	●	●		●
<i>Food Access</i>	■	■	■	■			■
<i>Forests/Timber</i>	●			●	●		
<i>Health</i>	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
<i>Housing</i>	●	■	●	■	■	■	■
<i>Industrial Uses</i>	●	■	■			●	
<i>Land Reclamation</i>				●			

<i>Land Use</i>							
<i>Minerals</i>							
<i>Military ports and airports</i>							
<i>Noise Contours</i>							
<i>Public Buildings</i>							
<i>Railways and Yards</i>							
<i>Recreation</i>							
<i>Scenic Resources</i>							
<i>School Siting</i>							
<i>Seismic Hazards</i>							
<i>Soil Conservation</i>							
<i>Soil Instability</i>							
<i>Transit</i>							
<i>Transportation Routes</i>							
<i>Transportation Terminals</i>							
<i>Tribal Resources</i>							
<i>Utilities/ Easements</i>							
<i>Waste Facilities</i>							

<i>Water Quality</i>	■	■	■	●	●		■
<i>Water Supply</i>	■		●	●	●		●
<i>Watersheds</i>	■			●	●		■
<i>Waterways/Water Bodies</i>	■	■	■	●	●		■
<i>Wildlife</i>	■	■		●	●		

● Identified in statute ■ Closely related to statutory requirements

Regardless of which format a general plan takes, the content must form an integrated, internally consistent plan. ([Sierra Club v. Board of Supervisors of Kern County \(1981\) 126 Cal.App.3d 698](#)). This chapter provides cross-references between and among elements to help identify where statutory requirements overlap and consolidation may occur.

Mandatory Element Format

The Government Code requires OPR to develop and adopt guidelines for the preparation of and the content of the mandatory elements required in city and county general plans. (See section [65040.2](#)). It states that the guidelines shall be *advisory* to each city and county in order to provide assistance in preparing and maintaining their respective general plans.

These *General Plan Guidelines* present the statutory elements in the order that they appear in section [65302](#). This order should not be construed as a ranking of importance, or the order in which a jurisdiction should prepare elements. All elements have equal weight under the law and can be prepared in any order or even combined, as discussed in [Chapter 1](#).

For a glossary of terms and description of parts of a general plan, see [appendix F](#).

Land Use Element

Introduction

The most fundamental decisions in planning begin with land use: what to put where. Land use planning envisions the future of a city or county, and involves interaction with all other elements of planning. At its best, the land use element will reflect the community's vision and promote thoughtful, equitable, and accessible distribution of different land uses, including residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and open space, as well as alignment with other general plan elements. It can also be a tool to improve [public health](#), reduce infrastructure costs, enhance [local economies](#) and address long-term environmental issues such as [climate change](#) and water resources.

The land use element can also be a venue to set forth and resolve conflicts and trade-offs involved in land use decisions. For example, increasing density may result in increased people, but

65302 (a) (a) A land use element that designates the proposed general distribution and general location and extent of the uses of the land for housing, business, industry, open space, including agriculture, natural resources, recreation, and enjoyment of scenic beauty, education, public buildings and grounds, solid and liquid waste disposal facilities, and other categories of public and private uses of land. The location and designation of the extent of the uses of the land for public and private uses shall consider the identification of land and natural resources pursuant to paragraph (3) of subdivision (d). The land use element shall include a statement of the standards of population density and building intensity recommended for the various districts and other territory covered by the plan. The land use element shall identify and annually review those areas covered by the plan that are subject to flooding identified by flood plain mapping prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or the Department of Water Resources. The land use element shall also do both of the following:

(1) Designate in a land use category that provides for timber production those parcels of real property zoned for timberland production pursuant to the California Timberland Productivity Act of 1982 (Chapter 6.7 (commencing with Section 51100) of Part 1 of Division 1 of Title 5).

(2) Consider the impact of new growth on military readiness activities carried out on military bases, installations, and operating and training areas, when proposing zoning ordinances or designating land uses covered by the general plan for land, or other territory adjacent to military facilities, or underlying designated military aviation routes and airspace.

(A) In determining the impact of new growth on military readiness activities, information provided by military facilities shall be considered. Cities and counties shall address military impacts based on information from the military and other sources.

(B) The following definitions govern this paragraph: (i) "Military readiness activities" mean all of the following:

(I) Training, support, and operations that prepare the men and women of the military for combat.

(II) Operation, maintenance, and security of any military installation.

(III) Testing of military equipment, vehicles, weapons, and sensors for proper operation or suitability for combat use.

(ii) "Military installation" means a base, camp, post, station, yard, center, homeport facility for any ship, or other activity under the jurisdiction of the United States Department of Defense as defined in paragraph (1) of subsection (e) of Section 2687 of Title 10 of the United States Code.

also increases in water supply reliability, avoidance of long term costs of infrastructure maintenance, improved water use efficiency, land conservation, housing and transit options and equity. Designating areas for solar development may increase energy independence and generate local economic benefits, but also implicate agricultural lands and alter aesthetic values. Pursuing [urban infill](#) may require higher intensity development, directed to a limited number of parcels, some less ideal due to siting location, but allow for more accessible transit and walkability. Identifying and resolving such issues in the land use element can result in development patterns that are predictable, coherent and reflect community values.

In this way, the land use element functions as a guide to planners, the general public, and decision-makers. Its objectives, policies, and programs relate directly to the other elements. In practice, it is the most visible and often-used element in the local general plan.

Correlations among Elements

	Circulation	Housing	Conservation	Open Space	Noise	Safety
Land Use	●	■	●	●	■	■

● Identified in statute ■ Closely related to statutory requirements

Required Contents

Government Code Section [65302\(a\)](#) describes the required content of a land use element. Specifically, the land use element must designate the proposed general distribution and general location and extent of the uses of the land for:

- Housing, business, and industry
- Open space, including agricultural land, watersheds, natural resources, and recreation
- Recreation facilities and opportunities
- Educational facilities

- Public buildings and grounds
- Future solid and liquid waste facilities
- Timberland Preserve Zone lands
- Areas subject to flooding, identified by flood plain mapping prepared by the [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#) or the [Department of Water Resources](#), or mapped flood areas adopted by the local community on Flood Insurance Rate Maps
- Other categories of public and private uses of land.

The land use element must also consider the impact of new growth on military readiness activities carried out on military bases, installations, and operating and training areas, when proposing zoning ordinances or designating land uses covered by the general plan for land, or other territory adjacent to military facilities, or underlying designated military aviation routes and airspace ([§ 65302\(a\)\(2\)](#)).

The land use element must also be consistent with airport land use compatibility plans where applicable ([§ 65302.3](#)). For more information on airport land use compatibility and requirements, see the [California Airport Land Use Planning Handbook](#).

The land use element should contain a sufficient number of land use categories to conveniently classify the various land uses identified by the plan. Land use categories should be descriptive enough to distinguish between levels of intensity and allowable uses. The element should include categories reflecting existing land uses as well as projected development. Additionally, the land use element must include a statement of the standards of population density and building intensity recommended for the various districts and other territory covered by the plan. The land use element must accommodate specific uses and avoid certain hazards. For example, the land use element must accommodate waterways used in flood management and groundwater recharge. General plans are currently required to consider the Urban Water Management Plans of water agencies within their jurisdictions.

The land use element must reflect the specific contents from other elements. For example, Section [65302\(a\)](#) requires that the land use element reflect “rivers, creeks, streams, flood corridors, riparian habitats, and land that may accommodate floodwater for purposes of groundwater recharge and stormwater management,” as identified in the [conservation element](#). Section [65302\(b\)\(1\)](#) requires that the [land use element](#) correlate with the [circulation element](#). Section 65302(f) requires that the [noise element](#) be used as a guide for establishing a pattern of land uses in the [land use element](#) that minimizes the exposure of community residents to excessive noise. For more detailed discussion of those requirements, see the discussion of the [circulation](#), [conservation](#) and [noise elements](#).

In some circumstances, as explained later in this chapter, the land use element must also identify disadvantaged communities and plan infrastructure in those communities.

Density and Intensity

California’s population continues to grow, and the general plan presents a platform to prepare for future needs. Jurisdictions must plan to accommodate their fair share of regional housing needs, as determined by their Council of Governments ([§65584](#)), but should consider other factors in their forecasts and build out scenarios, including population growth and trends, community and regional demographics, jobs/housing mix, economic trends, and infrastructure needs. [The Demographic Research Unit within the California Department of Finance \(DOF\)](#) prepares annual population estimates for the state and for individual counties and cities. Information on housing units, vacancies, average household size, components of population change, and special populations is also available. DOF also forecasts both population and public school enrollment for the state and for each county for 50 years into the future with age, sex, and race/ethnic detail. DOF data are used to comply with various state codes, including the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) process, and for research and planning purposes by federal, state, and local agencies, the academic community, and the private sector.

Population density Camp v. County of Mendocino (1981) 123 Cal.App.3d 334 established that a general plan must contain standards for population density. It did not, however, define such standards. The court in *Twain Harte Homeowners Association v. Tuolumne*

County (1982) 138 Cal.App.3d 664 defined population density as the “numbers of people in a given area and not the dwelling units per acre, unless the basis for correlation between the measure of dwelling units per acre and numbers of people is set forth explicitly in the plan.” Quantifiable standards of population density must be provided for each of the land use categories contained in the plan. Population density standards need not be restricted solely to land use designations with residential development potential. As the court stated in *Twain Harte*: “it would not be unreasonable to interpret the term “population density” as relating not only to residential density, but also to uses of nonresidential land categories and as requiring an analysis of use patterns for all categories . . . it appears sensible to allow local governments to determine whether the statement of population standards is to be tied to residency or, more ambitiously, to the daily usage [sic] estimates for each land classification.” Although applied differently from one jurisdiction to another, population density can best be expressed as the relationship between two factors: the number of dwellings per acre and the number of residents per dwelling. Current estimates of the average number of persons per household are available from the [Department of Finance’s Demographic Research and Census Data Center](#).

The *Camp* decision also held that an adequate general plan must contain standards for building intensity. Again, the *Twain Harte* court has provided the most complete interpretation of building intensity available to date. These are its major points:

- Intensity should be defined for each of the various land use categories in the plan;
- General use captions such as “neighborhood commercial” and “service industrial” are insufficient measures of intensity by themselves;
- Building intensity is not synonymous with population density.

Intensity will be dependent upon the local plan’s context and may be based upon a combination of variables such as maximum dwelling units per acre, height and size limitations, and use restrictions. Unfortunately, the court stopped short of defining what proper measures of building intensity are. Local general plans must contain quantifiable standards of building intensity for each land use designation. These standards should define the most intensive use that will be allowed under each designation. While the land use designation identifies the type of allowable uses, the building intensity standard will define the concentration of use. Intensity standards can include provisions for flexibility such as

density bonuses, cluster zoning, planned unit developments, and the like. OPR recommends that each intensity standard include these variables: (1) permitted lands uses or building types; and (2) concentration of use. Permitted uses and building types is a qualitative measure of the uses that will be allowable in each land use designation. The concentration of use can be defined by one or more quantitative measures that relate directly to the amount of physical development that will be allowed. Maximum dwelling units per acre is a good residential standard, with the actual numbers defined by local jurisdictions. Floor Area Ratio, or FAR (the ratio of building floor area to the total site area), is a useful measure of commercial and industrial intensity. The dual standard of maximum lot coverage and maximum building height is suitable for agricultural, open-space, and recreational designations where development is being limited. On the other hand, lot size, which has been widely used for agricultural and open-space designations, is an inadequate standard of building intensity because although it regulates lot area, it does not quantify the allowable concentration of development on each lot.

Statutory Requirements

This section offers a general guide to the contents of the land use element. Note that while the focus is on the minimum requirements for an adequate land use element, an effective general plan will focus more extensively on those issues of greatest relevance to the community.

Diagram

Requirement Description:

The land use element must designate the proposed general distribution and general location and extent of uses of the land, and must contain a diagram or diagrams ([§65302](#)). Many types of development policies lend themselves well to graphic treatment, such as the distribution of land uses, urban design, infrastructure, and geologic and other natural hazards. A diagram must be consistent with the general plan text ([§65300.5](#)) and should have the same long-term planning perspective as the rest of the general plan.

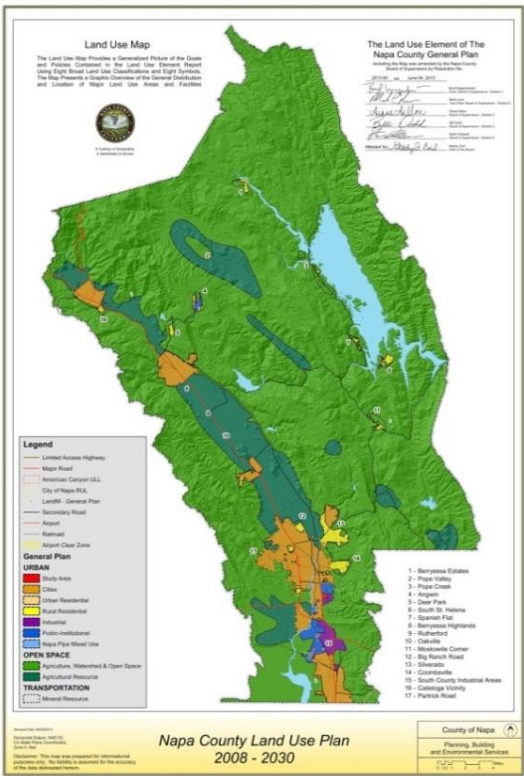
Figure 6: City of Los Angeles Land Use Map

Figure 7: City of Los Angeles Circulation Map



The text and diagrams in the land use element that address the location and extent of land uses, and the zoning ordinances that implement these provisions, may also express community intentions regarding urban form and design. These expressions may differentiate neighborhoods, districts, and corridors, provide for a mixture of land uses and housing types within each, and provide specific measures for regulating relationships between buildings, and between buildings and outdoor public areas, including streets (§ 65302). Jurisdictions may choose between traditional land use typologies such as “mixed use” or “residential,” typologies based on urban form and design such as “[transit](#)

Figure 8: Land Use Map for Napa County



[centers” or “new growth areas,”](#) or use a combination of typologies.

The Attorney General has observed that “...when the Legislature has used the term ‘map,’ it has required preciseness, exact location, and detailed boundaries....” as in the case of the Subdivision Map Act. No such precision is required of a general plan diagram (67 Cal.Ops.Atty.Gen. 75,77). As a general rule, a diagram or diagrams, along with the general plan’s text, should be detailed enough so that the users of the plan, whether staff, elected and appointed officials, or the public, can reach the same general conclusion on the appropriate use of any parcel of land at a particular phase of a city’s or county’s physical development. Decision-makers should also be able to use a general plan, including its diagram(s), in coordinating day-to-day land use and infrastructure decisions with the city’s or county’s future physical development scheme. However, given the long-term nature of a general plan, its diagram(s) and text should be general enough to allow a degree of flexibility in decision-making as times change. For example, a general plan may recognize the need for and desirability of a community park in a proposed residential area, but the precise location of the park may not be known when the plan is adopted. The plan would not need to pinpoint the location, but it should have a generalized diagram along with policies stating that the park site will be selected and appropriate zoning applied at the time the area is subdivided. In this sense, while zoning must be consistent with the general plan, the plan’s diagram(s) and the zoning map are not required to be identical.

Many communities use a map as the general plan diagram. The land use element should focus on the future growth and physical development of the community while ensuring the provision of adequate infrastructure and services to existing communities and development permitted by the land use map. Maps are useful for land use designations as well as designating building densities, FARs, and other development goals. The maps in this section demonstrate some of these varying uses utilized by jurisdictions. Mapping proposed land uses will help decision makers and the public understand relationships between different uses. It may also be helpful to include other elements, such as [circulation](#) and infrastructure, in the land use map when possible. Including known assets such as roads, transit routes, job centers, and service centers can help inform decisions about future land uses and needs. The [City of San Diego](#), for example, created numerous maps overlaying community assets and features such as wastewater facilities, planning area by financing type, and existing and proposed bikeways in addition to their land use and street system map. [The City of](#)

[Emeryville](#) used mapping to designate density and intensity in each land use category. The [GPG mapping tool](#) can assist communities map layers of data to identify concentrations of need and opportunity, and potential locations for specific types of land use. Directions for how to use the tool are available [here](#).

A land use element should contain a sufficient number of land use categories to conveniently classify the various land uses identified by the plan. Land use categories should be descriptive enough to distinguish between levels of intensity and allowable uses. The categories should align with the goals of the general plan. For example, a jurisdiction wanting to promote [infill development](#) and compact growth may consider setting minimum density standards along with traditional maximums. The element should include categories reflecting existing land uses as well as projected development. There need not be an equal number of land use designations and zoning classifications. In many cases, there may be more than one zone that would be consistent with each land use designation.

Land use policies contribute to a framework of plan proposals and implementation programs and in some instances provide the basis for requiring exactions and development fees of new projects (for example, parks and recreational facilities under the Quimby Act [\(\\$66477\)](#)). The distribution of land use categories which is reflected in the plan diagram must conform to the plans policies. Existing development may not adhere to all of the development policies set forth by the plan, however, new and future development must be in uniform compliance.

The land use element requirements provide an opportunity to determine the future of a community. By ensuring thoughtful, equitable, and accessible distribution of different densities, intensities, and land uses, including residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and open space, well as alignment with other general plan elements, the land use element can address long term environmental issues such as [climate change](#), enhance [local economies](#), reduce infrastructure costs, improve [air quality](#), increase [healthy transportation choices](#), create community resilience and promote quality [housing](#) for all residents of the community.

Housing, Business, and Industry

Requirement Description:

A land use element must designate the general distribution, location and allowable intensity of use for housing, business, and industry. To do so, a jurisdiction should:

- Examine population data, including Regional and local population and growth forecasts
 - Identify demographic trends (age, income, persons per household, vehicle ownership rates, etc.),
 - Inventory existing residential, commercial, and industrial land use in the planning area, and
 - Identify key community assets (i.e., a thriving downtown, water fronts and open spaces (particularly those identified in the open space and conservation elements), cultural amenities) that should be enhanced or preserved
 - Identify geographic, fiscal and institutional limitations that may affect the location and type of future growth, such as infrastructure (water and energy service, sewage treatment, storm drainage adequacy, fiber optics, etc.) and environmental (flooding, fire hazard, noise, etc.)
 - Consider functional and physical differentiation of land uses--neighborhoods, districts, corridors, employment centers, etc.
 - Analyze existing urban form--blocks, connectivity, building footprints, relationship to street frontages, etc.
 - Analyze properties subject to land use change/development—e.g., vacant, underdeveloped, transit-oriented, etc), including a discussion of the methodology used to identify such properties. Project needs for specific land uses, including watershed and groundwater recharge areas, residential, commercial, and industrial development, based upon estimates of future population, anticipated changes in environmental conditions such as those resulting from climate change,³ and economic conditions.
-

³ The CalAdapt tool (cal-adapt.org) helps communities understand the potential impacts of climate change in their region

Additionally, the land use element should consider appropriate methodology for identifying land use designations aligned with general plan goals.. For example, it may designate residential and commercial growth in a series of connected areas, or along existing transit routes, encouraging [compact development](#) and access for various populations; or require buffer zones surrounding industrial land and hazardous materials sites.

While the land use element is forward looking, it can also provide remedies for past harms. For example, the California Environmental Protection Agency's [Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment](#) has developed [Cal EnviroScreen](#) as a screening methodology that can be used to help identify California communities that are disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of pollution. In the context of planning for future growth, such data may inform future decisions about whether certain locations are appropriate for additional commercial and industrial facilities. The land use element can address environmental justice through careful consideration of the compatibility of certain land uses (see [Chapter 6](#) for more information on Equity and Environmental Justice). Additionally, the element should provide for the equitable distribution of services, opportunities, and resources particularly in communities that are the most in need.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
	Location needs for community assets	Population density (US Census)
	Assessment of capacity and availability of infrastructure necessary to support proposed land uses	Transportation routes and schedules, utility maps, broadband maps
	Potential gaps in services	Types of businesses geographically
	Support mixed use	Diversity of functional zoning

	communities and vibrant places supportive of recreation, retail, and housing	
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Open Space, including Agricultural Land, Natural Resources, and Recreation

Requirement Description:

A land use element must provide for the general location and distribution of “open space, including agriculture, natural resources, recreation, and enjoyment of scenic beauty” ([Cal Gov. Code § 65302\(a\)](#)). Determining policies and locations for open space in the land use element may help create a foundation to build detailed policies in the [conservation](#) and [open space](#) element, or connect to themes including [economic development](#), [climate change](#), or [healthy communities](#), for general plans not organized by elements.

Statewide policies favor preservation of open space. For example, Section 65561 of the Government Code states:

(a) That the preservation of open-space land ... is necessary not only for the maintenance of the economy of the state, but also for the assurance of the continued availability of land for the production of food and fiber, for the enjoyment of scenic beauty, for recreation and for the use of natural resources.

(b) That discouraging premature and unnecessary conversion of open-space land to urban uses is a matter of public interest and will be of benefit to urban dwellers because it will discourage noncontiguous development patterns which unnecessarily increase the costs of community services to community residents.

An open space element should inventory existing open space, and identify public land for future open space, as designated in the land use diagram. This may include designation of parks, greenways, forests, community gardens, and other open space categories identified by the community.

For cities and counties with agricultural lands, consideration of agricultural lands specifically in a broader land use context may help determine better policies to achieve their goals. In addition to their value as an economic driver, agricultural lands can help cities and counties preserve open space lands’ aesthetic qualities, maintain physical separation between urban areas, and preserve biological resources. However, some of the most valuable agricultural lands are located closest to growing cities and are thus at highest risk for

conversion. Without appropriate land use planning and policies that encourage conservation, many of these spaces may be permanently lost.

The land use element policies and maps must be consistent with the [conservation](#) and [open space](#) element, both of which contain more specific requirements. Those more specific requirements are described further in the discussions of the open space and conservation elements.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
	Proportion of the population (focus on vulnerable/disadvantaged communities) within X miles of recreational open space and with ready access e.g. transit	Census tract data with geo-mapping overlay of recreational open space. Consider also overlay with mass transit routes.
	Identify areas important to water supply or water quality to ensure protection	Water supply source areas, infiltration areas, areas above groundwater supplies, wetlands, natural filtration basins.
	Identify corridors for habitat connectivity	

Educational Facilities

Requirement Description:

The land use element must plan for the use of land for “education” ([Cal. Gov. Code § 65302\(a\)](#)). Educational facilities may include not just district-run facilities, but also charter schools, private schools, parochial schools, preschools, closed and surplus school properties, career colleges, higher education satellite campuses, home school centers, independent study centers, adult education and Regional Occupational Programs. Land use may affect school functions; by inhibiting or facilitating safe routes to schools, for example. Similarly, the placement of schools within a community may influence circulation patterns and where people choose to live. School siting should consider regional growth characteristics and changes in demographics and density as state and local laws change to prioritize more resource efficient development patterns. Additionally, school districts and communities should consider climate related risks, such as flooding, fire, and other hazards, in the planning of facilities. Ensuring that school districts participate in the planning process, through outreach, engagement, and coordination to the extent possible, can benefit the community and reduce potential future issues, and may help ensure alignment between city, county, and district goals.

Although school districts are required to comply with city/county zoning ordinances if the city/county has an adopted general plan and the ordinances make provision for the location of public schools, school district governing boards that have complied with notification requirements may, by a two-thirds vote, render a city/county zoning ordinance inapplicable to a proposed use of property by the school districts for classroom facilities ([Gov. Code 53094](#)) (Pursuant to Attorney General Opinion No. 99-401, “even though such use would not be in conformity with the general plan”). Early coordination between school districts and planners can help improve outcomes for all. Although land use approvals are controlled by cities and counties, and school siting is controlled by local school districts, consultation between those entities is required at several points in the planning process:

- Before adopting a general plan, a local government must solicit input from affected school districts. ([Gov. Code § 65352\(a\)\(2\).](#))
- Before completing any long-range plans that contemplate school site acquisition, a school district must notify local government planning agencies, and must participate in a meeting if requested. ([Gov. Code § 65352.2.](#))
- Before the acquisition of property for facilities, school districts must consult with the planning agency of local governments. ([Gov. Code § 65402.](#))
- The governing board of each school district before acquiring title to property for a new school site or an additional to a present site, shall give the planning commission having jurisdiction notice in writing... The planning commission shall investigate the proposed site... ([Public Resources Code 21151.2](#))
- The governing board of any school district shall meet with appropriate local government recreation and park authorities to review all possible methods of coordination planning design and construction of new schools, school sites and additions ([Ed. Code 35277](#))
- In addition to these general consultation requirements, schools districts must consult with local governments under certain specific circumstances. For example, if a school district will accept state funding for acquisition of a school site that is designated in a local general plan for agricultural uses, the district must consult with the local government. ([Ed. Code § 17215.5.](#))

California Code of Regulations, Title V, §14001,
Minimum Standards:

*Educational facilities planned by school districts
shall be:*

- Evolved from a statement of educational program requirements which reflects the school district's educational goals and objectives
- Master-planned to provide for maximum site enrollment
- Located on a site which meets California Department of Education standards as specified in Section 14010
- Designed for the environmental comfort and work efficiency of the occupants
- Designed to require a practical minimum of maintenance
- Designed to meet federal, state, and local statutory requirements for structure, fire, and public safety
- Designed and engineered with flexibility to accommodate future needs

Consultation between local governments and school districts at these various points in the planning process may resolve conflicts before they arise and provide a more efficient process. Useful consultation topics may include:

- District master plans and the acreage necessary to build a school, as well as other location factors.
- the ability of potential school sites to be accessed by pedestrian parents and students
- the potential impacts on schools of agricultural operations, industry, waste facilities, or other polluting land uses
- the potential for schools to function as hubs for community and other activities during non-school hours and the joint use of parks and other facilities

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
	<i>Proximity of schools to housing and transportation</i>	<i>Transit, bike, and pedestrian facilities maps, overlayed with housing and demographic maps</i>
	<i>Potential joint use programs between schools and communities</i>	<i>Community demographics, existing resources and assets</i>
	<i>Density of fast food outlets within ½ mile of schools (most relevant for high schools with open campuses).</i>	<i>City/county permit records</i>
	<i>Proximity of schools to safe active transportation options to/from home/school</i>	<i>Circulation element (sidewalks, bike paths; school catchment areas)</i>

Public Buildings and Grounds

Requirement Description:

The land use element must plan for the use of land for “public buildings and grounds”(Cal. Gov. Code § 65302(a)). Such “public buildings and grounds” may include community centers, libraries, and clinics. New or enhanced public facilities can catalyze other planned development and redevelopment of existing areas. Additionally, thoughtful distribution of public buildings can help ensure equitable access to public resources and services throughout the community. Consideration should be given to housing and transportation access surrounding proposed public buildings, as well as preservation of access to existing buildings and grounds. Depicting planned future public facilities on the general plan diagram may help align these uses with other community assets and needs.

An inventory of public buildings and grounds will help assess the distribution of public facilities across the community and identify underserved areas. The land use element should also assess the need for additional facilities based upon existing need for additional services and projected increases in land use intensity and population. An inventory of public and private historical landmarks (pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5020, and following) and existing public surplus land and disposition (pursuant to Gov Section 54220, and following, and Gov Section 25539.4) should also be included.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Equitable distribution of public facilities</i>	<i>Community asset maps</i>
	<i>Access to public facilities</i>	<i>Transit maps and timetables</i>
	<i>Examine opportunities for shared use of public buildings by communities, e.g. meeting spaces, auditoriums, etc</i>	

Solid and Liquid Disposal Facilities

Requirement Description:

The land use element must plan for the use of land for “solid and liquid waste disposal

Planning for Organic Waste Diversion

The Legislature and Governor Brown set an [ambitious goal of 75 percent recycling, composting or source reduction of solid waste by 2020](#). Achieving that goal will require the recycling, composting, or source-reduction of an additional 23.5 million tons of recyclables annually, which could add more than 100,000 new full-time and part-time jobs in manufacturing and collection/processing industries. To redirect that much organic material by 2020 will require major efforts on many fronts. This will include the expansion or siting of many facilities to accommodate higher recycling volumes. It will also require stronger markets for recycled materials, ideally within our state, and in fact within regions of our state to make those markets sustainable and responsive to local needs and opportunities. It will also demand successful implementation of other policies such as increased commercial recycling as mandated by AB 1826. And, it will call for even greater participation in recycling behaviors by the general public.

As local agencies work to meet the state’s goal of diverting 75 percent of California’s waste from disposal in landfills by 2020, they are turning to innovative technologies like anaerobic digestion to convert waste into energy as well as reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change. Local jurisdictions that have anaerobic digestion projects in their communities have seen a number of benefits including landfill disposal cost savings, the ability to meet greenhouse gas reduction goals and state waste diversion goals and requirements, increased community pride and recognition of their role as an environmental leader. When considering an anaerobic digestion facility, communities have the option to produce electricity or natural gas with heat as a co-product. Electricity can be used to power the facility or exported to the electrical grid. Natural gas can be used to fuel natural gas vehicles, including solid waste and recycling trucks, delivery trucks, passenger vehicles and buses. Either energy choice will generate a revenue stream which can help offset the costs of building an operating the facility.

The **Sacramento BioDigester** started in 2012 with the capacity to process 10,000 tons of food waste per year and was expanded to four times that size in early 2015. The 40,000 ton input capacity includes food waste from area restaurants, food processors, hospitals, international airport, elementary schools and supermarkets. The 730,000 gallons of biofuel produced annually are used at an onsite fueling station to fuel all of the natural gas trucks of the local trash and recycling collection fleet (24 of 55 trucks), as well as a portion of the city’s and county’s waste fleets, security cars, California State University Sacramento commuter buses (6 buses), two local catering companies and local school buses (exclusive contract with Sacramento School District’s 6-12 buses, backup provider for Elk Grove’s 6-12 buses). The waste gas (not clean enough to use for transportation fuel) is used to produce one million kilowatts of electricity which powers both the facility and the fueling station. The digestate is used to produce eight million gallons of organic soils and fertilizers for Sacramento area farms

Alameda County adopted its [Community Climate Action Plan](#) in February of 2014. It includes a Waste Action Area that Area is responsible for approximately 2,510 MT CO₂ e/yr and builds off the County’s already exemplary waste management programs by establishing a target of diverting 90 percent of all waste from landfills by 2030 with an interim goal of 82.5 percent by 2020. To achieve this, they have outlined measures and strategies that include mandatory household and commercial food waste recycling and a corresponding outreach and education program. The Alameda County Waste Management Authority/Source Reduction and Reduction Board, also known as [StopWaste.Org](#), is a Joint Powers Authority in Alameda County. Its members include the county, the fourteen cities in the county and two special districts that provide solid waste and recycling services. Its education activities to encourage businesses to recycle include technical assistance for waste prevention and recycling, targeted outreach and assistance to large businesses, online resources and assistance for smaller businesses, grants to businesses, and a high profile recognition program for businesses that recycle.

facilities” ([Cal. Gov. Code § 65302\(a\)](#)). Plans should consider an inventory of existing solid and liquid waste disposal facilities, as well as recycling and composting facilities, correlated with the [County Integrated Waste Management Plan and the County Hazardous Waste Management Plan](#). Based upon projected land uses and population growth, as well as potential opportunities to reduce waste streams, the land use element should consider the potential need for additional facilities. Recycling organic materials, pursuant to [AB 341](#), [AB 1826](#), the [AB 32 Scoping Plan](#), and [local requirements](#), through composting, mulching, and anaerobic digestion can produce renewable energy and fuel, reduce GHG emissions, and reduce waste put in to landfills by [over 30% statewide](#). As organic material recycling programs are implemented locally, consideration should be given in the general plan to infrastructure needed to support increased diversion of organics from landfills; including the location of new facilities, the possibilities and needs of upgrading existing facilities to accommodate organic material specifically’ or creating new curbside collection requirements incorporating food scraps with yard waste. These issues may also be addressed in the County Climate Action Plan. If relevant, cities and counties should consult with special districts and utilities providers to ensure the proposed land use plan is supported with adequate facilities.

In addition, the potential impacts of solid and liquid waste facilities, waste-to-energy plants, and similar facilities on surrounding land uses should be considered. Generally, schools, hospitals, residences and other potentially sensitive receptors should not be located near facilities which could have toxic air, land, or water quality impacts or other effects which have a negative health impacts. If designating new areas in the land use plan for waste facilities, the city or county should carefully consider whether surrounding areas are already burdened by existing pollutant burdens.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
	<i>Safety and health concerns for vulnerable populations</i>	<i>Locations of schools, hospitals, and elderly populations</i>

	<i>VMT effects of waste facility location</i>	<i>Location of current and proposed facilities and service routes</i>
	<i>Equity concerns for waste disposal facilities</i>	<i>Demographic information around proposed new facilities</i>

Identify and Annually Review Areas Subject to Flooding

Requirement Description:

In addition to the requirement to designate specific land uses, the Government Code includes other specific requirements that a land use element must address. One of those requirements is to “identify and annually review those areas covered by the plan that are subject to flooding identified by flood plain mapping prepared by the [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#) or the [Department of Water Resources](#)” ([Gov. Code § 65302\(a\)](#)).

Careful land use planning, fully informed by applicable flood information and management practices, can effectively reduce vulnerability to potential flood damage in cities and counties. This can include non-structural flood protection measures, low impact development, and improved stormwater management practices. Federal, State, and local agencies may construct and operate flood protection facilities to reduce flood risks, but some amount of risk will remain for those residing in floodplains. Therefore, increasing awareness can help ensure Californians recognize the potential threat and are better prepared to implement flood management activities.

[Assembly Bill 162 \(AB 162\)](#) requires additional consideration of flood risk in local land use planning throughout California and named [the Department of Water Resources \(DWR\)](#) as a source for floodplain information and technical data for local governments. [The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act](#) (SGMA) considers the connections between groundwater management, land use, and flood management, and allows local agencies to customize plans to their regional needs.

The Department of Water Resources created the [Implementing California Flood Legislation into Local Land Use Planning: A Handbook for Local Communities](#) and the [Guidance on General Plan Amendments for Addressing Flood Risk](#) to provide assistance and

recommendations for local governments complying with the [2007 flood legislation](#), and created the [sustainable groundwater management toolbox](#) to assist with the SGMA.

Local jurisdictions must assess floodplain mapping, groundwater recharge, and stormwater management information and determine any needed changes in the general plan. If the new data exists, then the existing general plan’s background information, maps, goals, policies, implementation measures, and land use map may need to be updated. As flood risk may change over time, cities and counties should establish policies for land use that are consistent with evolving flood risks.

The land use element policies addressing flooding should also be consistent with additional flood control policies required in the [conservation](#) and [safety](#) elements, as well as any policies related to [climate change](#), and should consider the potential for groundwater recharge benefits for the water supply.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
	<i>Prevent excess stormwater runoff</i>	
	<i>Mitigate drought and flood concerns on agricultural land</i>	
	<i>Incorporating stormwater capture and LID for water supply benefits and safety in to site planning</i>	<i>Levee Flood Protection Zones 100-year floodplain 200-year floodplain maps (if available) 500-year floodplain maps Awareness Floodplain Maps Best Available Maps</i>
	<i>Identify opportunities for integration between habitat</i>	<i>Choices in site planning – see DWR Land Use Tool</i>

Identification of Timberland Production Zone Lands

Requirement Description:

The land use element must designate “parcels of real property zoned for timberland production”(Gov. Code § 65302(a)(1)). Under the [Z'berg-Warren-Keene-Collier Forest Taxation Reform Act](#) of 1976, landowners may dedicate their land to timber growing for a ten-year period in exchange for tax benefits. Timber Production Zones (TPZ) (also known as timber preserve zones), are restricted in use to the production of timber or compatible use and automatically renewed every ten years unless otherwise terminated. These acres of TPZ form the State’s long-term production of privately owned forestland base. TPZs values are assessed annually within three general forest types (youth-grown redwoods, whitewoods (douglas-fir), and ponderosa pine and mixed conifers) by the State Board of Equalization (SBE) and receive a grade based on their ability to produce wood.

As population increases, encroaching development threatens timberland production zones. The state discourages the expansion of urban services and “premature or unnecessary conversion of timberland to urban and other uses”(Gov. Code § 51102). Ensuring the continual growing and harvesting of timber is important to “ensure the long-term productivity of the forest resource, the long-term economic viability of the forest products industry, and long-term stability of local resource-based economies” ([Gov. Code § 51101](#)). Therefore, the land use element regarding TPZ should support and remain consistent with policy objectives in the conservation and open space elements.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
	<i>Consider TPZ in land uses</i>	<i>Inventory location, type, amount, and ownership of land and timber resources subject to TPZ</i>

Impact of New Growth on Military Readiness Activities

Requirement Description:

A land use element must include consideration of impacts to the military's operations. Specifically, California [Government Code Section 65302 \(a\)\(2\)](#) requires consideration of impacts of land use decisions to the military's operations in local government's planning process. The law states that the land use element of the General Plan: "shall consider the impact of new growth on military readiness activities carried out on military bases, installations, and operation and training areas, when proposing zoning ordinances or designating land uses covered by the general plan for land, or other territory adjacent to military facilities, or underlying designated military aviation routes and airspace."

To further collaboration between the military and local jurisdictions and to prevent land use conflicts with military installations and training

activities, California law created a notification process to inform the military of local land use proposals that might have an impact on military facilities and operations. The law requires that local governments: 1) revise their development permit application forms so that they identify proposed projects within 1,000 feet of a military installation, beneath a low-level flight path, or within special use airspace and 2) notify the military when a proposed project, or an updated or revised general plan, might have an impact on military facilities and operations. The [California Military Land Use Compatibility Analyst](#) (CMLUCA) can help identify where military operations are in relation to cities and counties. [CMLUCA](#) can also generate a report to notify the military when there is a project proposed under military airspace.

Local military activity or Department of Defense Service points of contact can provide specific information about military installations and training areas within your County or City. It is important to check with the military points of contact to discuss the particular military

Military Compatibility Planning Resources

For more information on military compatibility issues, please see OPR's [California Advisory Handbook for Community and Military Compatibility Planning](#) and the [Community and Military Compatibility Planning: Supplement to the General Plan Guidelines](#).

Military staff are available to work with local governments on military compatible land use planning. For more information, and a memo on Gov. Code 65352 (a)(6)(A) and 65944 (e) notification requirements, please see OPR's [California Strategic Coordination and Engagement Program](#).

operations in your area, and how a local government’s vision for development can be compatible with those operations. In the case of areas with low-level flight paths, it is particularly important to coordinate with the branch points of contact. OPR maintains a list of military branch points of contact, [here](#).

Each City and County should implement a process to identify, coordinate and assist in resolving potential land use conflicts within nearby military training areas or under military Special Use Airspace to ensure that new development is compatible with military operations and safeguard mission training and testing requirements. New development should be reviewed and regulated to avoid impact to MOAs and maintain public safety. The [General Plan Guidelines Mapping tool](#) and the [CMLUCA](#) both can help map locations of military operations.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
	<i>Coordination with military land use needs</i>	<i>Inventory military land uses in general plan area</i>

Identify Unincorporated Island or Fringe Communities (Cities) or Legacy Communities (Counties)

Requirement Description:

According to legislative findings in SB 244 (Wolk, 2011), hundreds of unincorporated communities in California lack access to basic community infrastructure like sidewalks, safe drinking water, and adequate waste processing. These communities range from remote settlements throughout the state to neighborhoods that have been surrounded by, but are not part of, California's fast-growing cities. This lack of investment threatens residents' health and safety and fosters economic, social, and education inequality. Moreover, when this lack of attention and resources becomes standard practice, it can create a matrix of barriers that is difficult to overcome.

The purpose of SB 244 is to begin to address the complex legal, financial, and political barriers that contribute to regional inequity and infrastructure deficits within disadvantaged unincorporated communities.

Including these communities in the long range planning of a city or county, as required by SB 244, will result in a more efficient delivery system of services and infrastructure including but not limited to sewer, water, and structural fire protection. In turn, investment in these services and infrastructure will result in the enhancement and protection of

Planning for Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities

(Gov. Code Section 65302.10)

(b) On or before the due date for the next adoption of its housing element pursuant to Section 65588, each city or county shall review and update the land use element of its general plan to include all of the following:

(1) In the case of a city, an identification of each unincorporated island or fringe community within the city's sphere of influence. In the case of a county, an identification of each legacy community within the boundaries of the county, but not including any area within the sphere of influence of any city. This identification shall include a description of the community and a map designating its location.

(2) For each identified community, an analysis of water, wastewater, stormwater drainage, and structural fire protection needs or deficiencies.

(3) An analysis, based on then existing available data, of benefit assessment districts or other financing alternatives that could make the extension of services to identified communities financially feasible.

(c) On or before the due date for each subsequent revision of its housing element pursuant to Section 65588, each city and county shall review, and if necessary amend, its general plan to update the analysis required by this section.

public health and safety for these communities.

The land use element must identify certain disadvantaged unincorporated communities within the city or county sphere of influence. The identification must include a description of the community and a map illustrating its location. Under [general plan law](#), a community is defined as an inhabited area within a city or county that is comprised of no less than 10 dwellings adjacent or in close proximity to one another. (([Gov. Code Section 65302.10 \(a\)\(1\)](#))). A “disadvantaged community” is defined as a community with an annual median household income that is less than 80 percent of the statewide annual median household income (ID at sub. (a)(2)).⁴

Cities must identify “island communities,” any inhabited and unincorporated territories that are surrounded or substantially surrounded by one or more cities or by one or more cities and a county boundary or the Pacific Ocean; and “fringe communities,” any inhabited and unincorporated territories that are within a city’s sphere of influence.

Counties must identify “legacy communities,” any geographically isolated communities that are inhabited and have existed for at least 50 years.

Certain terms within these definitions can be interpreted differently based on local context. For example, terms such as “substantially surrounded” or “close proximity” can differ greatly between rural and urban communities.

⁴ Cities and counties should note, however, that the definition of “disadvantaged unincorporated communities” used by LAFCos (see Gov. Code 56033.5) may be different than the definition used by local governments. For LAFCOs, a disadvantaged unincorporated community means inhabited territory, as defined by Gov. Code Section 56046, or as determined by commission policy, that constitutes all or a portion of a disadvantaged community. (Gov. Code Section 56033.5). The difference between the definition of disadvantaged unincorporated community in the local government context and disadvantaged unincorporated community in the LAFCo context lies in the phrase “inhabited territory”, which is defined in Gov. Code Section 56046 as 12 or more registered voters.

The commission may also determine its own policy, which could rely on other definitions that more closely align with the community definition used by local governments rather than citizenship status.

Cities and counties should not rely solely on their LAFCos’ definitions of “disadvantaged unincorporated communities,” or on lists of disadvantaged unincorporated communities compiled by a LAFCo, but instead are required to do their own independent identification of all communities that meet the definition given above. Cities and counties may also consult with other agencies, organizations and reports which have identified unincorporated communities to guide identification and methodologies that lead to identification of communities.

As part of the disadvantaged communities’ analysis, the land use element must analyze the water, water supply, wastewater, stormwater drainage, and structural fire protection needs or deficiencies for each community through a lens of the horizon year and the impacts of a [changing climate](#). This analysis should be consistent with the descriptions and planning for utilities in the [circulation](#) element and the fire and flood protection policies in the [safety](#) element. LAFCO municipal service reviews can be helpful in supporting this analysis.

The analysis must also review the use of benefit assessment districts or other financing alternatives that could make the extension of services to identified communities financially feasible. Each time the [housing element](#) is updated; the analysis for these communities must be reviewed, and if necessary, updated.

For more information, please see OPR’s [Senate Bill 244: land Use, General Plans, and Disadvantaged Communities](#) Technical Advisory.

Cities and counties should perform the disadvantaged communities analysis asking these questions:

Type of Infrastructure	Existing Infrastructure: What is serving the community now?	What is the need for additional infrastructure?	How can finance mechanisms meet the need?	Which other programs and policies could address the infrastructure deficiency?	What is the community's input?
Required (GC 65302.10)					
Water					
Wastewater					
Stormwater Drainage					

Structural Fire Protection					
Potential Additional Services					
Police Protection					
Sidewalks					
Lighting					
Libraries, Schools, Community Centers, etc.					
Alleys and other unsafe roadways					
Public transit/ transportation					

The land use element should be updated to include the disadvantaged communities’ analysis, as required by [Gov. Code section 65302.10](#). Since all elements of a general plan must be internally consistent, the [safety](#), [circulation](#) elements, and other elements as necessary, should be reviewed to ensure consistency ([Gov. Code section 65300.5](#)).

The land use element should consider where there may be opportunities to provide more efficient, high quality service through consolidation, extension of services, and other regional solutions to address inadequacy of services and infrastructure. Expansive land use patterns [use more water per capita](#) and create higher vulnerability to climate change. The land use element should consider the effect of development patterns on water use and the potential costs of infrastructure to deliver water.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	Intent of analysis	Recommended Data
	<i>Proximity to sources of environmental pollution</i>	<i>Locations of pollution sources</i>
	<i>Identification of population affected</i>	<i>Demographic information</i>

Considerations in Land Uses Near High-Volume Roadways

A general plan update provides an opportunity to address issues that require thoughtful cross-sector analysis and [internal consistency](#). Land use decisions near or adjacent to high volume roadways (100,000 vehicles per day or a rural roadway as 50,000 vehicles)⁵ often present conflicts among [economic](#), [health](#), and [environmental](#) benefits from the development and the potential health impacts of vehicle emissions on nearby residents, businesses, schools, and other uses. Reducing exposure to pollution from near-roadway land use requires coordination and attention in several required general plan elements, including land use, [housing](#), and [circulation](#), as well as optional elements such as [air quality](#) and [health](#).

[Infill development](#) along primary [transportation](#) corridors can promote multiple policy objectives (e.g., good access to destinations, low VMT, environmental benefits, [health](#) benefits, [economic](#) benefits, fiscal savings for governments, and transportation cost savings for citizens), but it may also involve residential and commercial development adjacent to high-volume roadways and elevated levels of air pollution or air toxics. Studies show that exposure to traffic pollution is associated with health issues including worsening of asthma and other respiratory health impacts. The [Air Quality and Land use Handbook: A Community Health Perspective guide](#), published in 2005, provided a discussion of potential considerations for the general plan. State law restricts siting of new schools within 500 feet of a freeway.⁶ The guide also recommended a buffer of 500 feet for additional sensitive uses such as daycare centers, housing, playgrounds, and medical facilities. However, a buffer is not always possible with limited parcels for development, or where a buffer eliminates key locations for transit-oriented and other travel-efficient development. Fortunately, in the last

⁵ A freeway is defined as an urban roadway with 100,000 vehicles per day or a rural roadway as 50,000 vehicles with some exceptions. Section 17213 of the California Education Code and Section 21151.8 of the California Public Resources Code.

⁶ See above

decade, air quality has continued to improve due to transportation and emissions policies including cleaner fuels and improved vehicle technology⁷:

- Federal and state emissions standards for cars, trucks, and buses
- State regulations for zero emission vehicle adoption
- SB 375, regional, and local policies that reduce driving
- California's Sustainable Freight Transport Initiative
- Community- and government-led efforts to increase alternative transportation modes including public transit, biking, and walking

Truck retrofits and emission controls will result in additional substantial emissions reductions in the next few years, and other policies will continue to reduce emissions over the coming decade and beyond. Even as these policies are realized, there is a need for local governments to consider other options to protect sensitive populations from near-roadway pollution exposure and to reduce the health impacts associated with living or working near busy roadways.

Deciding where to site a project is not a simple task. The pollutant levels and air quality near a freeway can vary significantly based on air-flow patterns, temperature, time of day, season, presence of sound barriers, vegetation, height of structures and other variables. The variation of near-roadway pollution levels means that development plans must consider reducing both peak and long-term pollution exposures. Cross-sector discussion and analysis are of utmost importance to determine adequate sites for future development and balance multiple policy objectives.

Researchers have begun to evaluate measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate air pollution exposure near roadways. Simultaneously, new research shows health benefits from reducing GHGs; improving housing stock; preserving agricultural spaces, habitats, and recreational spaces; and engaging in the active transportation and mass transit made possible through infill development.

A comprehensive discussion around strategies that can be implemented during the general plan update to avoid the need for mitigation and strategies to reduce pollution exposure

⁷ <http://www.arb.ca.gov/research/apr/reports/January-2011-aqipprogram-report.pdf>

through near roadway land use has the potential to improve air quality and reduce exposure to toxics. Furthermore, a holistic examination allows for weighing benefits related to equity, health, economics, resource protection, and overall sustainability goals.

The Atlanta, Georgia Summer Olympic games of 1996 provides an example of a holistic approach to improve air quality through temporary mitigation strategies. Recognizing there would be an influx of people, Atlanta implemented a suite of policies to accommodate the additional visitors in a clean and travel efficient manner. These included a 24-hour public transit system, additional buses, modified work place policies such as telecommuting, and even adjustments to delivery schedules. Researchers were able to evaluate the impact of these short-term policies and showed decreased ozone, traffic counts, and acute care asthma visits.ⁱⁱⁱ Although they pursued temporary measures, it is reflective of what a more comprehensive suite of policy objectives could achieve through mode shift from car dependency to alternative forms of transit.

Just as in the Atlanta example, the suite of strategies considered to address near roadway land use must be evaluated in the local context. Potential strategies to address near-roadway land use are identified below. Additionally, strategies listed include those designed to reduce exposure to pollution when pollution exposure is an issue. The measures to reduce exposure to pollution are based on a review of the literature being conducted by the Air Resources Board.

Potential Strategies to avoid and reduce pollution exposure near roadways

Process strategies are aimed at identifying and thereby avoiding- if possible-near land use exposure to air pollution.

Process Strategies

- Consult with regional air district during early stages of the general plan update when prioritizing areas for infill development to identify stationary and mobile sources of toxic air contaminants
- Consult with regional air district, community, and other stakeholders during identification of potential infill sites and create an inventory
- Engage with local community members early in the general plan update process to discuss vision, local priorities, and concerns

- Engage with local community groups working on related issues early in the general plan update
- Incorporate air pollution reduction goals and exposure reduction goals into the general plan language
- Prioritize discussion of policy goals that have the potential to reduce emissions overall to be incorporated into the general plan policy language
- Prioritize discussion of policy goals that support mode shift from single occupancy vehicles to transit and/or active transit to be incorporated into the general plan policy language

Pollution Reduction Strategies

With respect to the specific problem of near roadway pollutant exposure, avoiding the need for mitigation is, of course, ideal. That is not always possible, and potential infill development sites near a high volume roadway may yield an array of benefits, which should be evaluated together with drawbacks associated with near roadway pollution.⁸ Additionally, many communities already have sensitive land uses near roadways that cannot be easily relocated, and so need mitigation strategies to reduce health impacts. Research over the last decade has identified mitigation strategies that reduce pollution concentrations, emissions, or improve air flow. Site-specific issues should be carefully considered as local jurisdictions, in conjunction with their regional air district, assess and select mitigation strategies. Also, as illustrated by the 1996 Atlanta games example, a combination of mitigation strategies often can have a greater impact than implementing one stand-alone measure.

Pollutant Removal

Indoor High Efficiency Filtration

Studies show that particle filtration systems and devices, specifically high-efficiency filtration with mechanical ventilation or portable high efficiency air cleaners, can be highly effective for reducing indoor pollution concentrations. High efficiency filters in ventilation systems, for

⁸http://www.arb.ca.gov/newsrel/newsrelease.php?id=758&utm_content=buffer2b867&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer

example, can remove from 50-99% of particles in the air. However, research shows that filtration technologies for gaseous pollutants (volatile organic compounds, or VOCs) are variable in their effectiveness; some remove certain VOCs well, but not others.

→ **Appropriate Context and Other Considerations:** State building codes require both new commercial and residential buildings to have mechanical ventilation with at least low to medium efficiency filtration. State regulation requires that mechanical systems in all workplaces (commercial buildings) be operated as designed to provide the required amounts of outdoor air exchange during periods of occupancy. Studies show that new high efficiency filter technologies produce less airflow resistance than in the past. Particulate matter pollution is typically of greatest concern and poses the highest risk, but if VOCs are a concern at a specific site, planners should consider additional mitigation methods or consult with filtration experts. Planners should also be aware of current state and local building codes and their respective air filtration requirements. Like other building systems, regular maintenance is necessary for highest filter and ventilation efficiency, and is required by regulation in commercial buildings.

→ **Possible Co-Benefits:** Filtration can also mean cleaner buildings with less dust and soot build-up on the interior. Some studies have shown improved employee health and reduced absences with reduced exposure to pollution. Indoor filtration is among a very small number of mitigations that can be implemented in existing buildings.

→ **Possible Drawbacks:** The cost of upgrading to high efficiency filtration in new construction is usually incremental and reasonable, but retrofit costs may be a limiting factor in some existing developments or buildings. Where retrofit costs are prohibitive, portable filtration devices should be considered. Like other mitigation measures, the effectiveness of indoor filtration systems depends on a variety of factors, many of which may be outside of the control of local and regional planners. For example, opening of windows and inadequate filter upkeep (e.g., cleaning and/or replacement) can reduce filtration benefits. Additionally, there are tradeoffs between HVAC energy efficiency and filtration quality.

Roadside Features

Vegetation for Pollutant Filtration and Dispersion

Studies show that vegetation can alter pollutant transport and dispersion. In some studies, specific locations and conditions translated to air quality benefits, though it should be noted that most studies have been conducted on the East Coast and in Europe where vegetation types and densities differ from what is found in California. Also, some of the studies involved modeling rather than actual measurements. Planners should be attuned to new research over the next few years.

→ **Appropriate Context and Other Considerations:** The role of vegetative barriers is still under study, and it is uncertain how effective this strategy can be in urban settings in California. Planners should select low-VOC emitting species and consider watering needs, allergen impacts, and site-specific context before installing vegetation. Online tools are available to assist with this selection process, including [SelecTree](#), developed by CAL FIRE and USDA Forest Service. Arborists and foresters can also assist in selecting the right species and installation setting and configuration. Because pollution reductions have not yet been quantified in California, it is recommended that this strategy be used in conjunction with others, like solid barriers.

→ **Possible Co-Benefits:** Expanding the tree canopy may mitigate the urban heat island effect, leading to indirect air quality benefits and energy savings. Additionally, urban greenery can encourage outdoor activity, and improve the street aesthetic.

→ **Possible Drawbacks:** findings from some studies suggest that planting trees in urban environments can inhibit ventilation.

Solid Barriers and Sound Walls

Measurement and modeling studies consistently find that solid barriers reduce near-road downwind concentrations by increasing vertical dispersion of pollutants emitted by vehicles. The magnitude of the reduction and its spatial extent depend on the height of the barrier, the width of the road, and micrometeorology.

→ **Appropriate Context and Other Considerations:** Solid barriers should only be considered for installation along freeways, which already act as barriers in the urban environment, and are not recommended for other urban environments, where they might add new barriers, worsen sight-lines, and cause blight

→ **Possible Co-Benefits:** Barriers used for other purposes, like sound walls, may have the added benefit of mitigating near-roadway pollution, and vice versa.

→ **Possible Drawbacks:** There is limited evidence that the pollutant plume is lofted vertically up and over the barrier and returns to ground levels at some distance from the barrier at concentration levels greater in those locations than a non-barrier case. Also some studies show that barriers may increase concentrations on the roadway side of barriers, so this should be considered for in-vehicle pollution exposure. Solid barriers can have negative impacts on community connectivity and can actually increase vehicle miles traveled if site-specific conditions and context are not considered, particularly if they are applied in non-freeway settings. Initial research suggests that gaps in roadside barriers may lead to higher localized pollutant concentrations at and immediately beyond the gaps.

Urban Design

Building Design that Promotes Ventilation along Street Corridors

The physical layout of urban streetscapes influences air flow and pollution movement. High volume roadways (100,000 AADT or greater) lined with tall buildings (over five stories), can lead to pollutant buildup between the buildings. Variations in building height, or gaps between buildings, can allow ventilation and help disperse pollutants. Research studies show that street corridors characterized by buildings with varying shapes and heights building façade articulations, and spaces that encourage air flow (e.g., plazas or parks) benefit from better pollutant dispersion and air quality. Where such design can be accomplished without decreasing overall building density (and thereby increasing overall vehicle travel), pollutant exposure may be reduced.

→ **Appropriate Context and Other Considerations:** Planners should consider [complete streets](#) designs for urban roadways as a way to improve ventilation. Wider sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and other pedestrian-oriented features create space for

better air flow and pollutant dispersion. If planners intend to site new parks, consider siting open space facilities with low volume such as trails and reserves, rather than playgrounds or recreation fields close to heavy traffic or other emission sources. Lastly, this mitigation measure should be considered in the context of the overall need to increase developmental density while also providing important health benefits.

→ **Possible Co-Benefits:** Promoting ventilation can help support the preservation and siting of parks and employing complete streets as a mechanism will also facilitate active transportation, leading to additional health benefits. Complete Streets and parks have also been demonstrated to increase property values and promote business viability.

→ **Possible Drawbacks:** In cases where this measure would cause building intensity to decrease, leading to more dispersed overall development, more vehicle travel will generally result, undermining benefits. In these cases, it could also inhibit economic development and neighborhood vibrancy. For this reason, this strategy is only recommended when it can be achieved without reducing overall corridor density.

Space or other uses separating freeways from sensitive land uses

Studies show that pollutant concentrations drop off rapidly with increasing distance from high volume roadways (100,000 AADT or greater) during the daytime. The rate of drop-off with distance at night and in the early morning is much more gradual, so pollutant concentrations tend to be higher at these times. Other studies also show that development density is associated with VMT reduction and health benefits, and some areas near high volume roadways are key locations for urban development.

→ **Appropriate Context and Other Considerations:** The ARB Land Use Handbook recommends avoiding siting sensitive land uses--like schools and healthcare facilities--within 500 feet of a freeway. Other uses, like commercial buildings, may be placed closer to the freeway because these buildings typically have greater traffic emissions protections in place (e.g., more advanced ventilation and filtration technologies and permanently closed or sealed windows). Also, pollution concentrations tend to be higher at night (there is a reduced drop-off in concentrations with distance at night)

so daytime uses are recommended for near-roadway development. As with the “Building design that promotes ventilation along street corridors” strategy above, this strategy should be considered in the context of the overall need to increase developmental density, which also confers health and environmental benefits.

→ **Possible Co-Benefits:** Space separating sensitive uses not only protects them from air quality-related health impacts, but is also one way to avoid potential health impacts related to freeway noise.

→ **Possible Drawbacks:** Forgoing development near high volume roadways can lead to more dispersed development and high levels of vehicle travel. Driver exposure to near roadway pollutants has also been found to have health impacts, as pollutant concentrations are highest on the roads themselves. Further, additional vehicle travel worsens regional air quality and GHG emissions; more dispersed land use patterns consume more land, are associated with greater building energy use, water use, impervious surface area, and lead to poorer health outcomes partly because of reduced active transportation mode share. If parking is used as an alternative use separating sensitive uses from freeways, the result could be an increase in vehicle use due to an increase in parking availability. Similarly, when parking is sited, it may interfere with improved pedestrian or transit access to services.

Traffic Management

Speed reduction mechanisms such as roundabouts

Speed reduction mechanisms change the “design speed” of the road, meaning the physical characteristics of the road that give drivers a sense of how fast or slow they should go. These features can reduce stop-and-go driving and hard accelerations and thereby reduce emission rates. Some of these features, like roundabouts, can also be used to replace signalized intersections. Studies show that roundabouts in place of signalized intersections can reduce localized pollutant concentrations, depending on context and site-specific conditions. Roundabouts are defined by Caltrans as a form of a circular intersection design.

It is distinguished in that 1) the shape is generally circular; 2) They have geometric features to slow traffic passing through the intersection; and

3) They are always yield- controlled for the motorist entering the roundabout.⁹

→ **Appropriate Context and Other Considerations:** Planners should carefully consider the potential direct and indirect effects of implementing speed reduction mechanisms to determine if they will result in emissions reductions and other environmental and safety goals. Regarding roundabouts, planners should consider site-specific factors and consult with [Caltrans](#) and [Federal Highways Administration](#) guidance. Under certain conditions (e.g., high traffic volume, intersections of a high-speed road with a low-speed road, etc.) a roundabout may not provide an air quality benefit over other types of intersection control. Planners should also be aware that roundabouts require sufficient right of way, which may not be available at some intersections in dense urban settings, and that they should be designed to accommodate buses, emergency vehicles, and other large vehicles. Traffic circles are smaller and their main purpose is traffic calming; roundabouts allow greater vehicle flow¹⁰

→ **Possible Co-Benefits:** Depending on site-specific conditions, speed reduction mechanisms can result in improved safety and fewer or less serious injuries when accidents occur. Data show that roundabouts are safer for pedestrians than traffic lights, and studies associate roundabouts with fewer and less severe auto collisions, opportunities for improved aesthetics, and reduced operations and maintenance costs.

→ **Possible Drawbacks:** At roundabouts, bicycle safety is a potential concern which can be addressed through signage and other features of proper roundabout design. Planners can consult [Federal Highways Administration¹¹](#) or [National Association of](#)

⁹ http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist1/roundabouts/roundabout_english.pdf

¹⁰ <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersection/roundabouts/fhwasa10006/#s2>

¹¹ <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersection/roundabouts/>

[City Transportation Officials](#) ¹²guidance for more information. Also, planners should be careful when considering placing roundabouts near schools as they may require additional signage and education about safe crossing for children and parents.

Traffic Signal Management

Various traffic signal management systems can reduce stop-and-go driving and vehicle idling, resulting in reduced localized pollutant concentrations compared to corridors that do not implement these systems. Studies show that site specific conditions dictate the magnitude of reductions.

→ **Appropriate Context and Other Considerations:** Planners should consider site-specific factors when considering traffic signal coordination for a corridor or roadway section. Many different types of signal management are available, and planners should identify what is best for air quality, vulnerable road user safety, and transit and active mode throughput and comfort

→ **Possible Co-Benefits:** When implemented with site specific context and other goals in mind, traffic signal management can improve safety and enable efficient movement of transit of vehicles and bicycles

→ **Possible Drawbacks:** In some cases, coordinated signals may create more stops for vehicles driving on perpendicular streets, thus increasing emissions. Additionally, coordinated signals could translate to more vehicle throughput and possible increased VMT on the road section and beyond. Theoretically, increasing vehicle speed could potentially counteract measures to improve walkability, bike access, and Complete Streets objectives given more difficulty crossing intersections.

Speed Reductions on High Speed Roadways (>55 mph)

Research studies have identified an optimal average speed range of ~35-55 mph within which per-mile traffic emissions and fuel consumption are minimized.

¹² <http://nacto.org/references/federal-highway-administration-3/>

→ **Appropriate Context and Other Considerations:** Speed reductions are an appropriate method for reducing near roadway impacts on roadways where speed limit and design speeds exceed 55 mph. Speed decreases may increase travel times.

→ **Possible Co-Benefits:** Lowering vehicle speed to within the optimal range for emissions reductions generally will result in improved safety.

→ **Possible Drawbacks:** Travel times may increase slightly.

Near roadway siting considerations and strategies will continue to evolve. For example, vehicles will continue to become cleaner over the coming years, changing the balance in benefits and drawbacks of near roadway development. A general plan update provides a platform on which to consider multiple policy options simultaneously in striking this balance, and the opportunity to come to holistic, internally consistent solutions.

Resources

ARB short publication [\[live link in development\]](#)

US EPA Reference Documents [\[live link in development\]](#)

ⁱ A freeway is defined as an urban roadway with 100,000 vehicles per day or a rural roadway as 50,000 vehicles with some exceptions. Section 17213 of the California Education Code and Section 21151.8 of the California Public Resources Code.

ii <http://www.arb.ca.gov/ch/handbook.pdf>

iii A freeway is defined as an urban roadway with 100,000 vehicles per day or a rural roadway as 50,000 vehicles with some exceptions. Section 17213 of the California Education Code and Section 21151.8 of the California Public Resources Code.

iv <http://www.arb.ca.gov/research/apr/reports/January-2011-aqiprogram-report.pdf>

v http://www.arb.ca.gov/newsrel/newsrelease.php?id=758&utm_content=buffer2b867&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer

vi Friedman, Powell et al. (2001)[add full citation]

vii http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist1/roundabouts/roundabout_english.pdf

viii <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersection/roundabouts/fhwasa10006/#s2>

ix <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersection/roundabouts/>

x <http://nacto.org/references/federal-highway-administration-3/>

Correlation with Circulation Element

The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 supports the State's climate action goals to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through coordinated transportation and land use planning with the goal of more sustainable communities. This concept is discussed further in the [circulation](#) section.

The Land Use Element and Regional Sustainable Communities Strategies

... California's land is an exhaustible resource, not just a commodity, and is essential to the economy, environment and general wellbeing of the people of California. It is the policy of the state ... to protect California's land resource, to insure its preservation and use in ways which are economically and socially desirable in an attempt to improve the quality of life in California. (Gov. Code § 65030.)

Most land use approvals occur at the local government level. Nevertheless, local land use elements must reflect their statewide and regional contexts. (See, e.g., Gov. Code § 65030.1 ("decisions involving the future growth of the state, most of which are made and will continue to be made at the local level, should be guided by an effective planning process, including the local general plan, and should proceed within the framework of officially approved statewide goals and policies directed to land use, population growth and distribution, development, open space, resource preservation and utilization, air and water quality, and other related physical, social and economic development factors").) Indeed, in adopting a general plan, local governments must consult with other entities that may be affected by the plan. Such other entities include, but are not limited to, neighboring cities, counties and special districts, school districts, local agency formation commissions, areawide planning agencies, federal agencies, including the military, water providers, and California Native American tribes. (*Id.* at § 65352.)

Several regional activities may directly bear on local land use planning. One example is the sustainable communities strategy contained within regional transportation plans. While the Government Code states that a sustainable communities strategy does not regulate the use of land (Government Code section 65080(b)(2)(K)), for several reasons, local governments should consider and, if appropriate, incorporate applicable policies into local land use elements.

First, sustainable communities strategies should already reflect the basic outlines of local plans. Second, some transportation funding is tied to consistency with the regional transportation plan. Third, streamlining benefits under the California Environmental Quality Act may be tied to consistency with the sustainable communities strategy. Fourth, any inconsistency with the regional transportation plan would need to be analyzed as part of the CEQA analysis for the general plan.

A sustainable communities strategy might be relevant to a local land use element in several ways. A sustainable communities strategy should identify locations within the region where land use and transportation investments can be maximized. Therefore, a local government planning agency might want to consider whether the land use element places development in transportation-efficient

Transit Oriented Development (TOD)

Cities and counties should promote more livable communities by expanding opportunities for transit-oriented development (TOD) so that residents minimize traffic and pollution impacts from traveling for purposes of work, shopping, school, and recreation. TOD is defined as moderate- to high-density development located within an easy walk of a major transit stop, generally with a mix of residential, employment, and shopping opportunities. TOD encourages walking and transit use without excluding the automobile. TOD can be new construction or redevelopment of one or more buildings whose design and orientation facilitate transit use (Statewide Transit-Oriented Development Study: Factors for Success in California, California Department of Transportation, 2002). A well-designed, vibrant TOD community can provide many benefits for local residents and businesses, as well as for the surrounding region. Compact development near transit stops can increase transit ridership and decrease rates of vehicle miles traveled (VMT), thereby yielding a good return on transit system investments. TOD can also provide mobility choices, increase public safety, increase disposable household income by reducing transportation costs, reduce air pollution and energy consumption rates, help conserve resources and open space, assist in economic development, and contribute to the housing supply. TOD is a strategy that may help a community achieve its general plan goals related to circulation, housing, environmental quality, and economic development. Additionally, by improving access to jobs and housing and revitalizing existing neighborhoods, TOD can be a tool for promoting environmental justice. A variety of factors need to be considered during the development and implementation of TOD. These factors include transit system design; community partnerships; understanding of local real estate markets; coordination among local, regional, and state organizations; and providing the right mix of planning and financial incentives and resources. A successful TOD will reinforce the community and the transit system. Transit operators, property owners, and residents should be involved in the development of TOD proposals. Data to identify and assess potential locations for TOD should be collected during preparation of the land use, circulation, and housing elements of the general plan. An inventory of potential development (and redevelopment) sites within a quarter to a half mile of existing and proposed transit stops may reveal potential locations for TOD. Additional data may be used to verify the optimum location and mix of uses to further refine the viability of TOD at specific transit hubs. This data may include origin and destination studies, transit ridership projections, and data to determine the appropriate jobs-to-housing ratio and level of retail services. The appropriate density and intensity will support a high level of transit service. An optimal mix of uses will provide opportunities to shop, work, live, and recreate without the need for an automobile. Local governments can promote TOD through general plan policies that encourage supportive densities and designs and a mix of land uses. TOD-supportive policies may provide for higher land use densities, reduced parking requirements, decreased automobile traffic levels of service, and increased transit levels of service. TOD policies should facilitate a pedestrian-oriented environment with features such as traffic calming strategies, traditional grid street patterns with smaller blocks, and architecture that orients buildings to sidewalks, plazas, and parks rather than to parking.

locations as identified in the sustainable communities strategy. Other relevant policies include density and intensity maximums and minimums, as well as policies related to active transportation and protection of public health. Incorporating such policies into a local land use element may assist the local government in avoiding conflicts with neighboring jurisdictions, and perhaps more importantly, maximizing benefits of transportation funding and regulatory streamlining.

Completeness Checklist

Statutory Citation	Brief Description of Requirement	Explanatory Notes
Gov. Code, § 65302(a)	General distribution, location and extent of:	
Gov. Code, § 65302(a)	Housing Density and intensity Potential for flood and recharge?	
Gov. Code, § 65302(a)	Business Density and intensity Potential for flood and recharge?	
Gov. Code, § 65302(a)	Industry Density and intensity Potential for flood and recharge?	
Gov. Code, § 65302(a)	Open space, including agriculture, natural resources, recreation, and scenic resources Potential for flood and recharge?	
Gov. Code, § 65302(a)	Education Density and intensity	

	Potential for flood and recharge?	
Gov. Code, § 65302(a)	Public facilities Density and intensity Potential for flood and recharge?	
Gov. Code, § 65302(a)	Solid and liquid waste disposal Density and intensity Potential for flood and recharge?	
Gov. Code, § 65302(a)(1)	Timberland Production Intensity Potential for flood and recharge?	
Gov. Code, § 65302(a)	Other? Density and intensity Potential for flood and recharge?	
Gov. Code, § 65302(a)	Identify areas subject to flood plain mapping Annual review	
Gov. Code, § 65302(a)(2)	Impact on military readiness?	
Gov. Code, § 65302(b)(1)	Correlation with the circulation element (see below)	

OPR Recommended Policies

These policies are an example of recommended policies adopted by varying jurisdictions, to be modified and used as appropriate. A full list of recommended policies and examples can be found [here](#)

<i>Sample Policy</i>	<i>Example of Application</i>	<i>Relationship to Other Elements</i>
Provide for and encourage the development of a broad range of uses in the (city/county)'s commercial centers and corridors that reduce the need to	La Habra	CIRCULATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE

travel to adjoining communities and capture a greater share of local spending.		
Encourage a balance between job type, the workforce, and housing development to reduce the negative impacts of long commutes and provide a range of employment opportunities for all (city/county) residents.	SACRAMENTO	<i>CIRCULATION, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL EQUITY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE</i>
Ensure that parks and recreation facilities, community services, and amenities are equitably distributed and accessible throughout the (city/county).	PASADENA	<i>OPEN SPACE, SOCIAL EQUITY, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES</i>
Require that new neighborhoods be designed to locate all housing within ½ mile of a central gathering place that incorporates public spaces, shopping areas, access to transit, and/or community-supportive facilities and services.	SACRAMENTO	<i>CIRCULATION, OPEN SPACE, SOCIAL EQUITY, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</i>
Prioritize the provision of necessary major street infrastructure and utility capacities for properly zoned-land, consistent with the General Plan, so this land can be developed in a timely manner to support economic development.	FRESNO	CIRCULATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Support programs to assess the quality and quantity of the water captured, stored and used within each unique watershed in the (city/county)	SONOMA COUNTY	OPEN SPACE, CONSERVATION, SOCIAL EQUITY, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES, CLIMATE CHANGE

In order to mitigate the conversion of agricultural land resulting from a discretionary project requiring a General Plan or Community Plan amendment from 'Agriculture' to a residential land use designation, the (city/county) shall require the replacement of agricultural land at a 1:1 ratio with agricultural land of equal quality located in (city/county)	Stanislaus County	OPEN SPACE, CONSERVATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE
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DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Circulation Element

Introduction

The circulation element is not simply a transportation plan, but rather a strategy addressing infrastructure needs for the circulation of people, goods, energy, water, sewage, storm drainage, and communications. By [statute](#), the circulation element must correlate directly with the [land use](#) element, but also has direct relationships with other elements. The provisions of a circulation element affect a community’s physical, social, and [economic](#) environment, as well as its [health](#).

[Government Code Section 65302 \(b\)](#)

(1) A circulation element consisting of the general location and extent of existing and proposed major thoroughfares, transportation routes, terminals, any military airports and ports, and other local public utilities and facilities, all correlated with the land use element of the plan.

(2) (A) Commencing January 1, 2011, upon any substantive revision of the circulation element, the legislative body shall modify the circulation element to plan for a balanced, multimodal transportation network that meets the needs of all users of streets, roads, and highways for safe and convenient travel in a manner that is suitable to the rural, suburban, or urban context of the general plan.

(B) For purposes of this paragraph, “users of streets, roads, and highways” mean bicyclists, children, persons with disabilities, motorists, movers of commercial goods, pedestrians, users of public transportation, and seniors.

Correlations Between Elements

	Land Use	Housing	Conservation	Open Space	Noise	Safety
Circulation	●	■	■	●	■	●

● Identified in statute

■ Closely related to statutory requirements

Required Contents

The circulation element must, consistent with Government Code Section [65302 \(b\)](#), include the location and extent of existing and proposed

- Major thoroughfares
- Transportation routes
- Terminals
- Military airports and ports
- Public utilities and facilities

Statutory Requirements

[Government Code requires](#) that any revision of circulation elements after Jan 1, 2011 must plan for a “balanced, multimodal transportation network that meets the needs of all users of streets, roads, and highways for safe and convenient travel in a manner that is suitable to the rural, suburban, or urban context of the general plan.” Users are defined in statute as “bicyclists, children, persons with disabilities, motorists, movers of commercial goods, pedestrians, users of public transportation, and seniors.”

The circulation element must identify funding for capital, operations, and maintenance of

Relationship with Regional Planning

California courts have recognized that general plans must reflect the regional context. Circulation elements must, therefore, account for both regional transportation plans and, in some cases, congestion management plans.

Regional Transportation Plans

Metropolitan planning organizations and regional transportation planning agencies prepare regional transportation plans in cooperation with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Caltrans, the Air Resources Board, the Department of Housing and Community Development and other stakeholders, including system users. The purpose of the regional transportation plan is to establish regional goals, identify present and future transportation needs, deficiencies and constraints, analyze potential solutions, estimate available funding, and propose investments. In most regions in California, the regional transportation plan includes a sustainable communities strategy that aligns transportation investments with a land use pattern designed to reduce regional greenhouse gas emissions. In order to be eligible for federal and state funding, transportation projects must be consistent with the adopted regional transportation plan, including an applicable sustainable communities strategy.

Regional transportation plans are required to reflect certain population growth and distribution assumptions contained in local general plans. As a practical matter, circulation elements should also reflect the adopted regional transportation plan. A circulation element that is not consistent with a regional transportation plan will need to provide sufficient information regarding local funding to support transportation improvements that are not consistent with the regional plan. If adopting a circulation element that is not consistent with the regional transportation plan, that inconsistency and its impact on regional greenhouse gas reductions will also need to be analyzed in the environmental analysis under the California Environmental Quality Act. (See, e.g., CEQA Guidelines § 15125(d).)

planned additions to the network, additions to the network that would be triggered by policies in the element, and the existing network.

Correlation with the Land Use Element

Requirement Description:

Creating connected, accessible, and complete systems of circulation networks and ensuring access to opportunities within a community and region requires coordination between land use and circulation planning. Due in part to the connection between transportation funding and greenhouse gas reduction established in [SB 375](#), vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is becoming an increasingly important metric of circulation element performance. Because the circulation element is required to correlate with the land use element, it should account for the features of the particular community. For example, the circulation element may demonstrate that health care facilities and commercial destinations are not accessible via public transit from the affordable and senior housing planned in the land use and housing elements, highlighting the need for additional transit. Mapping transportation options as part of the general plan process may help identify gaps to address. The [land use](#) and circulation elements are essential places to plan for mobility and access for all community members. Pedestrian and bicycle routes in the circulation element should connect parks and schools with residential areas identified in the land use element. Moreover, truck routes should be directed away from sensitive users and designated instead to serve areas designed for commercial and industrial uses in the land use element. Speed limits and roadway design should reflect the area's nearby uses.

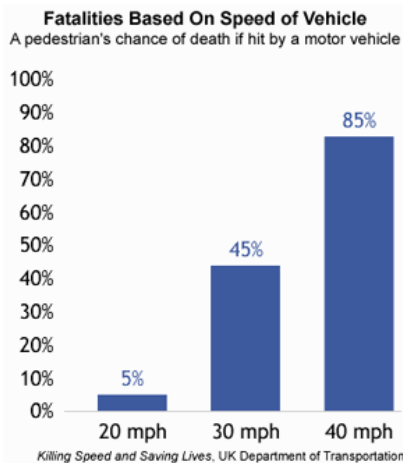
Regional Transportation Plans, SB 375, and Sustainable Community Strategies

The [Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 \(Sustainable Communities Act, SB 375, Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008\)](#) supports the State's climate action goals to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through coordinated transportation and land use planning with the goal of more sustainable communities.

Under the Sustainable Communities Act, ARB sets regional targets for GHG emissions reductions from passenger vehicle use. In 2010, ARB established these targets for 2020 and 2035 for each region covered by one of the State's [metropolitan planning organizations \(MPO\)](#). ARB will periodically review and update the targets, as needed.

Each of California's MPOs must prepare a "sustainable communities strategy" (SCS) as an integral part of its regional transportation plan (RTP). The SCS contains land use, housing, and transportation strategies that, if implemented, would allow the region to meet its GHG emission reduction targets. Once adopted by the MPO, the RTP/SCS guides the transportation policies and investments for the region.

Where vulnerable road users are present, research shows that motor vehicle speed limits above 20-25 miles per hour create risk of [serious](#) injury or fatality.



Special attention should be paid to ensure that all transportation facilities are designed to be safe, accessible, and connected for all users. Simply putting a sidewalk or a bike lane on one street, for example, without a complete system that connects residents and destinations, may not address additional needs of a community. Using context sensitive, flexible designs can help increase access for all users while improving overall conditions or addressing common issues such as stormwater runoff, air quality, and bicyclist and pedestrian safety. For additional information on the design of complete streets, see [NACTO Street Design Guidelines](#) and [Caltrans Complete Street Guidelines](#).

One of the most recent appellate court cases addressing the correlation requirement explained:

[T]he internal consistency and correlation requirements do not require a city or county to limit population growth or provide traffic management measures to ensure that its transportation infrastructure can accommodate future population growth. The Planning and Zoning Law ([Gov. Code, § 65000 et seq.](#)) does not require a city or county to avoid adverse impacts on transportation. Rather, the city has broad discretion to weigh and balance competing interests in formulating development policies....

([Federation of Hillside & Canyon Assns. v. City of Los Angeles](#) (2004) 126 Cal. App. 4th 1180, 1196.) In characterizing the correlation requirement, the same court explained that "the

circulation element of a general plan must provide meaningful proposals to address changes reflected in the land use element, and the land use element must provide meaningful proposals to reflect changes reflected in the circulation element.” (*Ibid*) (emphasis added).) A proposal is “meaningful” if the element identifies reasonably reliable funding sources. (*Id.* at 1196-1197.) On the other hand, an element that identifies proposals with no reasonable expectation of implementation (i.e., funding) is not meaningful, and therefore would not satisfy the statutory correlation requirement. (*Id.*; see also [Concerned Citizens of Calaveras County v. Board of Supervisors \(1985\) 166 Cal. App. 3d 90, 103.](#)) In order to “meet the needs of all users” of the circulation network, meaningful proposals will address not just capital costs, but also costs associated with operations and maintenance. Because the circulation element addresses both transportation and services infrastructure, the statutory correlation requirement applies to utilities infrastructure as well. Appropriate fiscal analyses should be prepared to support the conclusion that the circulation element is capable of supporting the land uses planned in the land use element.

Tools are available to allow comparison of total infrastructure costs and benefits across several build-out scenarios. These tools enable communities to make decisions regarding land use patterns with long term infrastructure costs and benefits in mind. More information about these tools and how to use them is available [here](#).

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of Analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
	Connectivity of transportation systems	Schedules and maps of existing and planned transit routes, bike paths, and pedestrian infrastructure
	Equitable access to destinations	Housing connections to employment, opportunity, and recreational centers

		through transit, bike ped, and roadways
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Major Thoroughfares

Requirement Description:

Consideration must be given in the general plan to the development and improvement of major thoroughfares, including future acquisitions and dedications, based on proposed land use patterns and projected demand. Cities and counties should consider the location and design of major thoroughfares in new developments, as well as street patterns (curvilinear, grid, modified grid, etc.), coordination with other infrastructure such as utilities, and relationships between destinations and transportation systems. Design standards for local streets (including, but not limited to, width, block size, speed, and accommodation of parking and bicycle and pedestrian traffic) may also be included in the circulation element. Providing charging stations and alternative fuel stations can facilitate use of zero emissions vehicles, reducing air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	Intent of Analysis	Recommended Data
	Identify needed repairs and align schedules with multiple goals	Assess current roadways, including road safety, active transportation needs, stormwater management, and potential for planting. Examine and align schedules

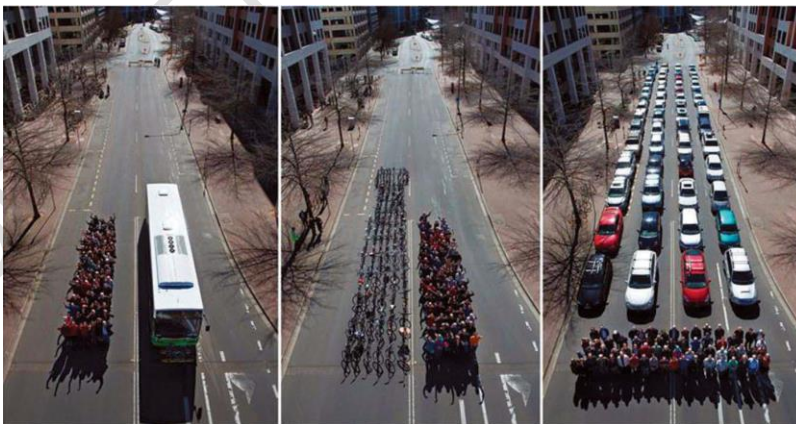
Transportation Routes

Requirement Description:

Transportation systems are essential to any city or county and its economy, serving as a potential engine to enhance opportunity and improve equity. However, the implementation and maintenance of infrastructure and resources is costly, impacts the environment, and

affects human health. Transportation planning in California is rapidly changing, driven by a number of key factors:

- An increasing focus on *Access to Destinations* rather than just mobility, and transportation solutions involving proximity that better accomplish livability and environmental goals
- Shrinking local government budgets
- A mismatch of anticipated revenue and future maintenance obligations under current policies
- An increasing focus on greenhouse gas emissions reduction
- An ongoing focus on air quality
- An increasing recognition of the [research consensus that adding roadway capacity can induce additional vehicle travel](#)
- An increasing recognition of the transportation network's effect on [land use](#), and in turn the effect of more dispersed land use on the [environment](#) and human [health](#)
- Demographic and social trends creating increased demand for infill and walkable development
- Emerging sharing economy transportation solutions such as carshare, rideshare, and bikeshare services reducing automobile use and dependence
- Enhanced technology and information such as nextbus and intelligent transportation systems making navigation of multiple transportation systems more simple and convenient and influencing transportation choices.



Further, recent legislation has driven change in the way we approach transportation and the types of solutions we provide:

- The [Complete Streets Act](#)
- [Global Warming Solutions Act \(AB 32\)](#)
- The [Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act \(SB 375\)](#) and the completion of Sustainable Communities Strategies
- CEQA Streamlining for infill [Projects](#) (SB 226)
- SB 743 [shift](#) in CEQA transportation metric

Because of these factors, many California communities are substantially revising their circulation elements.

Setting Goals and Measuring Progress in Transportation in the 21st Century

The transportation system consists of viaducts to transmit vehicles and people (e.g. roads, sidewalks), ports to station vehicles at their destination (e.g. parking lots), and the vehicles themselves (e.g. busses, bicycles, cars). In developing a general plan, a jurisdiction should consider its overall objectives, and develop policies for each of these three components that support those objectives.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of Analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
	Ensure access for all members of community	Population demographics, employment centers, transit routes and headways, cost of transportation by income and location

Roads

Requirement Description:

The underlying goal of transportation is to provide access to destinations, also called providing “connectivity.” Connectivity is provided by a combination of mobility (speed) and proximity (distance). The transportation system has traditionally been viewed primarily

through a mobility lens, measuring speed (e.g. via delay metrics like Level of Service). In addition, the primary focus has been on Level of Service (LOS), a qualitative measure of location specific delay, and auto-mobility rather than other modes. While auto mobility will continue to be critical to providing connectivity into the foreseeable future, so will other means of connectivity. Because of traffic impacts, increasing auto-mobility can lead to worsening proximity, the other element of connectivity. Motor vehicles and the infrastructure needed to support them (arterials, parking lots, freeways, etc.) take up substantial space in cities, which can result in sparser development and longer travel distances. Additionally, providing better auto-mobility (i.e. increasing speeds) can induce additional vehicle travel, which causes congestion, over time eroding mobility benefits while also generating environmental impacts. Many mobility measures for non-auto modes do not share these disadvantages, even though they may not always demonstrate the benefits of providing connectivity with proximity.

The Level of Service measure has traditionally been used in determining intersection and roadway capacity needed to provide congestion-free motor vehicle travel for residents, workers, and shoppers in a suburbanizing landscape. However, as transportation networks become more complex and constrained by an increasing number of factors, Level of Service has become less useful in determining capacity needs. [SB 743](#) is beginning to address this mismatch and focus on measuring Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) instead. Additional vehicle travel can lead to poor outcomes for the environment and human health. *Level of Service* standards [can encourage more vehicle travel](#).

Environment	Health	Cost
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emissions<ul style="list-style-type: none">• GHG• Regional pollutants• Energy use<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transportation energy• Building energy• Water<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water use• Runoff – flooding• Runoff – pollution• Consumption of open space<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sensitive habitat• Agricultural land	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collisions• Physical activity• Emissions<ul style="list-style-type: none">• GHGs• Regional pollutants• Mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased costs to state and local government<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roads• Other infrastructure• Schools• Services• Increased private transportation cost• Increased building costs (due to parking costs)• Reduced productivity per acre due to parking• Housing supply/demand mismatch → future blight

Ideally, the circulation element of the General Plan should include a discussion of the transportation system designed and sized using metrics that capture connectivity (the fundamental purpose of transportation) rather than mobility (just one facet of connectivity). For example, the state of [Virginia](#) and some cities (e.g. [Pasadena](#)) are already developing connectivity metrics and models to guide infrastructure investment. While connectivity measures and models are still being developed in California, Level of Service analysis remains relevant to transportation planning. The following are some suggestions for using the Level of Service in the general planning context:

Use Level of Service during the planning process to size roadways, but consider other criterion at the point of project implementation to require mitigation or to allocate impact fees. Level of Service can be used while other metrics are under development, to help size roadways to accommodate automobile travel generated by planned growth. Allocating the cost of roadways and improvements to individual projects based on Level of Service analysis can be problematic, because it disproportionately charges development that occurs in congested areas. Because infill development tends to locate in areas with existing congestion, it readily trips Level of Service thresholds; meanwhile less transportation efficient outlying or greenfield development is generally located where there is little existing traffic, so even though it contributes more to regional congestion, it tends not to trip Level of Service thresholds. As a result, charging transportation impact fees based on LOS unfairly penalizes and discourages infill development, and subsidizes outlying development.

Places with high delay (poor LOS) [tend to be](#) places exhibiting higher GDP.

Level of Service should be balanced with other metrics when used, rather than triggering decisions by itself. Other metrics are needed to measure the efficacy, comfort and safety of other transportation modes, and to measure the proximity benefits conferred by infill development. It is important to estimate the cost of achieving any Level of Service threshold, in order to determine whether that threshold is fiscally feasible, and to identify, where possible, funding for long-run maintenance costs associated with building to any Level of Service thresholds.

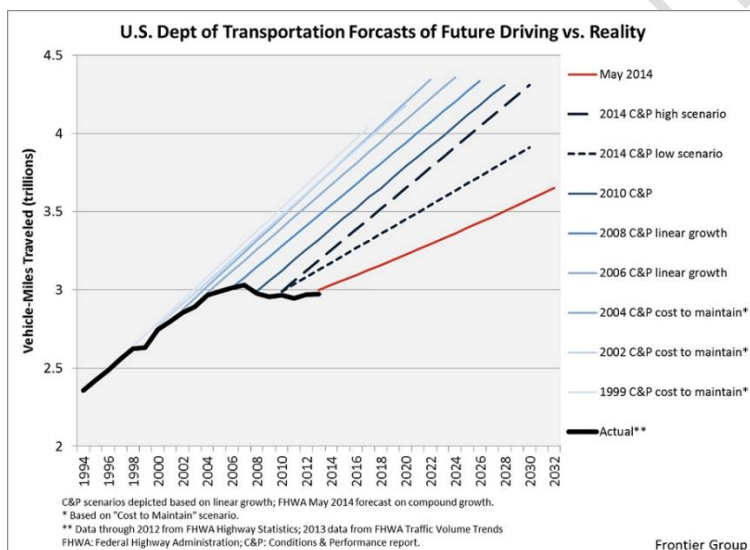
Set Level of Service thresholds in consideration of the tradeoffs between mobility and other goals. Accommodating automobile traffic has direct tradeoffs with greenhouse gas

emissions, other emissions that affect air quality, pedestrian collision risk, and active mode share and the resulting public health benefits. It also leads to sparser land development patterns, creating indirect tradeoffs with consumption of agricultural land and sensitive habitat, household energy use, household water use, and water runoff affecting water quality and flood risk. A general plan should consider these tradeoffs when recommending a Level of Service objective.

Transit

Requirement Description:

As more of the population chooses alternatives to driving and California strives to reduce VMT and GHG emissions, transit availability becomes increasingly important. There are many important considerations for transit in general plans. Policies can promote and prioritize high quality transit, aligned with housing and economic development policies, which in turn increases efficiency of the overall transportation system. Transit providers should be involved in general plan processes, ensuring their alignment with community priorities.



Well-planned transit infrastructure can improve access to opportunity by making job centers, housing, schools, and other major destinations reachable by high numbers of residents via quality transit service. Providing infrastructure at transit stops for convenience and safety, such as proper lighting, covered shelter, and safe crossings; implementing transit priority on streets and bridges, such as priority lanes, signals, and other types of infrastructure; and

utilizing technology to communicate transit patterns in real time can help speed transit vehicles, shorten travel times, promote safety, and attract additional passengers.

Coordinating transit stops, stations, and routes with bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure can help create first and last mile connections, promoting reduced VMT for short trips and potentially increasing transit ridership for an increased range of residents.

Developers and employers can also incentivize transit ridership, and general plan policies can promote such programs through general visions and goals or through specific transit zones in the plan.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of Analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
	Identify most needed new transit routes	Population demographics, travel patterns, housing and opportunity centers

Active Transportation: Bicycle and Pedestrian Networks

Requirement Description:

Increasing bicycle and pedestrian networks in a city or county improves accessibility for numerous populations. Ensuring that infrastructure is safe for residents from ages “8 to 80” captures the needs of recreational riders, ADA users, bicycle and pedestrian commuters, and all people in between. Bicycle and pedestrian networks should be complete systems for transportation, including coordination with land use plans, housing, and transit systems. Bicycle and pedestrian networks should connect residents to employment centers, community centers, schools, commercial districts, and transit stops. Paths and facilities, both on and off road, should include user amenities such as shade trees, benches, and drinking fountains. Complete [Streets policies](#) should be integrated in to [bicycle and pedestrian](#) policies as well.

Some jurisdictions have separate bicycle and pedestrian plans, which should correspond and align with the general plan.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of Analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
	Align bike and ped improvements with road improvements	Re-paving schedule, map needed improvements, crash rate data

Terminals

Requirement Description:

Airports, seaports, train stations, and other terminals play an important role in a region’s transportation, social, and economic makeup. As such, the circulation element should include these facilities in its transportation discussion. Often, terminals bring a specific set of land-use issues that may need to be addressed as future growth occurs in existing infill areas. These issues include pollution, noise, traffic, and public safety. The location, type, and height of development in areas surrounding airports, should be considered in the context of the local Airport Land Use Plan. Airport Land Use Plans must coordinate with general plans’ [land use](#) elements, but should be considered in regards to circulation and [safety](#) as well. Some actions to consider in the circulation element include:

- Assess the adequacy of and safety hazards associated with existing aviation facilities and the need for expansion and improvements.
- Limit potential noise and safety hazards posed by airport activities to surrounding land uses
- Mitigate aviation-related hazards posed to and by aircraft
- Make access to and from aviation facilities available by all modes of transportation

Military Airports and Ports

Requirement Description:

The Department of Defense (DOD) has a significant presence in the State of California, using 10% of the State’s land. Consequently, military ports and airports impose demands on local circulation infrastructure that should be factored into the overall analysis of local circulation planning in a general plan. Furthermore, changes to circulation patterns and routes may

affect military operations. For example, development along formerly rural roads can significantly increase urban traffic and limit the use of routes for military transport purposes. Such changes can impede military operations, especially for units that commute to conduct training operations. On the other hand, improvements to circulation routes, such as ports, can contribute to operations.

Public Utilities and Facilities

Requirement Description:

In addition to transportation routes, the circulation element must identify the location and necessity of public utilities and facilities. Relevant utilities include water, sewers, stormwater, telecommunications and broadband, electric vehicle charging stations, electricity and natural gas lines. These facilities relate directly to the land uses planned in the land use element, consequently, the circulation element should consider not just "right sizing" such infrastructure to serve only that growth that is actually planned in the land use element, but also placing infrastructure in areas that maximize efficiency and minimize impacts to the community. California courts have noted that plans for infrastructure should follow determinations regarding desired growth that reflect resource constraints and other broader considerations. (See, e.g., [*County of Amador v. El Dorado County Water Agency* \(1999\) 76 Cal. App. 4th 931, 949-950.](#))

In identifying existing infrastructure and planning for future needs, local governments should work closely with any relevant service providers, including water districts, utilities and others. In 2011, local governments were required to plan for infrastructure needs of disadvantaged unincorporated communities through [*Senate Bill 244*](#). The bill requires the land use element to analyze needs for infrastructure in these communities. To ensure consistency, the circulation and land use elements' policies and programs should be coordinated. For additional information on planning for disadvantaged unincorporated communities, see the Land Use Element chapter of the GPG and [*Senate Bill 244: Land Use, General Plans, and Disadvantaged Communities Technical Advisory*](#).

Both state and federal governments are implementing various funding programs that serve the goal of expanding broadband access to unserved and underserved areas. Within California, the [*California Public Utilities Commission \(CPUC\)*](#) manages the [*California*](#)

[Advanced Services Fund \(CASF\)](#), which invests hundreds of millions of dollars annually in broadband deployment. The state also created the [California Emerging Technology Fund \(CETF\)](#), which was designed to be a public-purpose venture capital fund.

“Dig once” policies can help ensure efficiencies and reduce costs among circulation infrastructure. The underlying premise of a “dig once” policy is to coordinate conduit construction with unrelated civil works projects, such as digging up the roads and sewer construction, to create a usable infrastructure for future network deployment/provisioning. A new provider can run fiber through leased conduit space at a fraction of the costs, incentivizing more private actors to deploy or reducing costs to the city if self-provisioning broadband services. [Dig once policies](#) are flexible and may come in many forms. The goal and emphasis should be on impacting the rights of way as few times as possible by inviting multiple parties to lay their infrastructure together. For example, if conduit construction was promoted along ongoing civil work projects, fiber deployment costs drop by \$30,000-\$100,000 per mile. On average, 60 to 90 percent of network deployment costs come from civil works as opposed to equipment and maintenance. For more information on broadband deployment, see the Broadband technical advisory.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of Analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>

Other Considerations

Transportation and Climate Change

Climate change is a critical consideration in a General Plan circulation element because transportation is a significant source of greenhouse gases. In California, transportation is the largest source of emissions: According to the California Air Resources Board, about 37% of the state's GHG emissions come from the transportation sector,¹³ as compared to 28% nationally.¹⁴ If life-cycle emissions [extraction/refining/pipelines] are included in addition to tail pipe emissions, transportation is the source of over half of California GHG emissions. An update to the circulation element presents an opportunity to integrate measures for reducing vehicle travel that are critical to meeting our state's GHG reduction goals.

General plans can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions by establishing policies for reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled and laying the groundwork for zero emission infrastructure.

Strategies to reduce transportation-related GHG emissions fall into three general categories: vehicle efficiency, switching to low-carbon fuels, and reduction of vehicle miles traveled. General plans' most important policy levers focus on VMT reduction, by influencing land use and specifying transportation network characteristics and travel demand management strategies. Further, general plans can help jurisdictions become "ZEV-ready", e.g. by specifying provision of alternative fuel fueling and charging stations [cite EV Guidebook].

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

¹³ California Air Resources Board. *California Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventory: 2000-2012*. May 2014. www.arb.ca.gov/cc/inventory/pubs/reports/ghg_inventory_00-12_report.pdf (see Fig. 8 on P. 16)

¹⁴ US Environmental Protection Agency. "Transportation Sector Emissions." 22 July 2014. www.epa.gov/climatechange/ghgemissions/sources/transportation.html

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of Analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>

Parking

Many General Plans set forth the goal of providing their communities with “adequate parking.” Historically, this has meant directing new land use projects to meet the full demand for free parking. Doing so provides a substantial subsidy to automobile mobility (summing to roughly \$20-40 Billion per year in California¹⁵). Free parking is a community choice, but should be recognized as one that entails costs, and can lead to additional vehicle travel, which in turn can impact community goals for livability, mode shift, environmental protection, emissions reduction, and fiscal benefits.

The circulation element of a general plan provides a jurisdiction the opportunity to evaluate various tradeoffs, including the costs and benefits of parking, in conjunction with other planning goals. Tradeoffs a jurisdiction might consider include:

- Ready parking availability can induce increased vehicle miles traveled (VMT), leading to increased greenhouse gas and emissions.
- Parking requires land that might be occupied by other land use, which may provide greater benefit (including fiscal benefit).
- Parking areas paved with standard asphalt can exacerbate impacts on water quality and runoff control.
- Free parking subsidizes motor vehicles potentially at the expense of other transit subsidies
- Transportation structures can adversely affect floodways

¹⁵ Shoup, Donald. *The High Cost of Free Parking*. (2005) APA Planners Press.

Many jurisdictions are already confronting parking tradeoffs and addressing these issues. Some strategies can be used to manage parking demand and parking supply include:

Managing Demand for Parking

- *Support alternative transportation.* Encourage development projects that will provide improvements to bicycle, pedestrian, and transit access. (See e.g. [City of Berkeley](#)) This includes providing parking geometries that are compatible with and support pedestrian and bicycle facilities, such as back in parking and protected lanes (see images below)
- *Attach a cost to parking.* When construction and maintenance are considered, provision of parking is costly. Jurisdictions may wish to consider the benefits of optimizing parking prices to reflect the equilibrium between supply and demand. (See e.g. [City of San Diego](#); [City of Sacramento](#))

Managing Supply of Parking

- *Set parking maxima.* Set maximum parking rates or replace minimum parking rates with maximum parking rates. Especially in TOD or mixed-use development areas, relaxing minimum requirements, or establishing maximum requirements instead, will mean that space is available for other uses. (See e.g. [Sacramento County](#); [City of San Jose](#))
- *Allow the market to determine parking.* In many cases, the free market will lead to provision of the optimal amount of parking, excluding external costs of vehicle travel.
- *Manage the use of existing spaces.* Prioritize based on location (e.g. proximity to employment centers) and intended use (e.g. short- or long-term). Implement shared parking or establish parking benefit districts. (See e.g. [Sacramento County](#)) Optimizing use of existing parking will help make efficient use of land within the jurisdiction's boundaries.



SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	Intent of Analysis	Recommended Data
	Price parking per utilization	Parking utilization

Traffic Control Around Schools

High volumes of pedestrian traffic, vulnerable users, and other factors create increased need for safety around schools. Considerations in roadway design should take in to account the specific needs of the population, including bicycle and pedestrian access, transit and drop off needs, and safety around crosswalks, intersections, and roundabouts. For additional guidance on traffic control specifically around schools, see the [CalTrans Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices](#), including [Section 3c](#) on roundabout markings and [Part 7](#) for traffic control around schools.

Addressing Tradeoffs in Circulation

The transportation network should be designed to accommodate multiple competing interests. The circulation element should address the tradeoffs between these interests rather than listing desirable but mutually impossible outcomes. The following are some of tradeoffs that this section might address.

- Roadway motor vehicle throughput and speed v. impacts on community along roadway
- Roadway motor vehicle throughput and speed v. capacity for other modes
- Roadway design speed and risk to pedestrians and cyclists
- Breadth of coverage of transit system v. cost
- Provision of bicycle facilities v. provision of additional motor vehicle capacity
- Transit priority measures (e.g. signal priority and queue jump lanes) v. automobile capacity
- Accommodation of potential emergency vehicle turning movements v. design for pedestrian safety
- Accommodation of freight vehicles v. pedestrian safety
- Automobile throughput and speed v. traffic calming measures such as narrower travel lanes, roundabouts, raised medians, speed tables, small curb radii, etc.)

Goods Movement

While freight moves throughout the state in multiple ways, trucks specifically:

- Emit diesel particulate matter (DPM), which is a localized pollutant that is particularly hazardous to human health.
- Generate high noise levels
- Pose special collision hazards because of their size, especially to vulnerable road users, and for them especially during turning movements, where rear wheels can follow a shortcut-track and collide with pedestrians and cyclists

For these reasons, truck routes should be designed to minimize risk to areas containing concentrations of sensitive receptors and vulnerable road users. Also, goods movement facilities (distribution centers, rail yards, and ports) should be placed in locations that do not bring high levels of truck traffic near residential areas or schools whenever possible. Coordinating the [land use element](#) with the circulation element, freight mobility plans, and other relevant efforts, with the engagement of school boards, goods distributors, and community members may help assess tradeoffs and needs in locating facilities.

[Land use](#) and circulation elements may also be coordinated for freight movement in congested or high traffic corridors, such as by designating specific freight zones, lanes, or management practices, to improve efficiency overall. Policies specific to the needs of a community, depending on factors such as density, proximity to goods movement facilities, and average daily traffic (vehicle and non-vehicle) may help ease safety and congestion issues associated with urban freight movement.

In general, trucks carrying freight have a substantially higher value on their travel time than private passenger vehicles. For this reason, it makes sense for a general plan to support transportation improvements that facilitate the timely movement of goods, meet the needs of local business and industry, and support the efficient transfer of goods between truck, rail, and other transportation modes. These interests of goods movement must be balanced with the negative impacts to safety, air quality, and noise described in the previous paragraph.

Congestion Management Plans

Each county containing an urbanized area must establish a congestion management agency to prepare and adopt a congestion management plan. (See Gov. Code §65089, et seq.) The congestion management plan establishes programs for mitigating the traffic impacts of new development, including deficiency programs where congestion is extreme, and monitoring the performance of system roads. The congestion management plan is expected to link land use, transportation, and air quality concerns. At a minimum it must include all state highways and all principal arterial roads. Performance of the congestion management plan is measured through the land use approval process.

As noted above, many jurisdictions have traditionally focused their circulation elements on automobile transportation, planning to certain “level of service” standards. It is important to note, however, that congestion management law does not require general plans to designate level of service standards for every roadway and intersection. In fact, there are many reasons that a circulation element should not do so. (See text box, below.) Moreover, congestion management plans address far more than just automobile transportation. They must also include an evaluation of the performance of multiple modes of travel and provide a program for travel demand management. Notably, projects identified in a congestion management plan must be consistent with the regional transportation plan, and its sustainable communities strategy, in order to be funded. (Gov. Code, § 65082.) In updating a circulation element, therefore, a local government must put the congestion management plan in a context that includes reductions in vehicle miles traveled, and provides for multiple users of the transportation system, including transit, bicycles and pedestrian transportation.

Completeness Checklist

Statutory Citation	Brief Description of Requirement	Explanatory Notes
Gov. Code, § 65302(b)(1)	Existing and proposed major thoroughfares	

Gov. Code, § 65302(b)(1)	existing and proposed transportation routes	
Gov. Code, § 65302(b)(2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transit	
Gov. Code, § 65302(b)(2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bicycle	
Gov. Code, § 65302(b)(2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pedestrian	
Gov. Code, § 65302(b)(2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Automobile	
Gov. Code, § 65302(b)(2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Other (i.e., equestrian, waterways, etc.)?	
Gov. Code, § 65302(b)(1)	existing and proposed terminals	
Gov. Code, § 65302(b)(1)	any military airports and ports	
Gov. Code, § 65302(b)(1)	other local public utilities and facilities	
Gov. Code, § 65302(b)(1); <i>Fed. of Hillside & Canyon Assns. v. City of Los Angeles</i> (2004) 126 Cal. App. 4th 1180, 1196	Identified funding for capital, operations and maintenance?	
Gov. Code, § 65302(b)(1)	Circulation element links destinations, users and capacities described in the land use element?	

OPR Recommended Policies

These policies are an example of recommended policies adopted by varying jurisdictions, to be modified and used as appropriate. A full list of recommended policies can be found [here](#)

<i>Sample Policy</i>	<i>Example of Application</i>	<i>Relationship to Other Elements</i>
[City, county] shall design intersections and public right-of-ways to include adequate and safe access for all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists of all ages and abilities.	SAN PABLO	LAND USE, SAFETY, SOCIAL EQUITY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
[City, county] shall require the provision of bicycle parking and related facilities in new employment-generating development to facilitate multi-modal commute choices.	SAN PABLO	
[City, county] shall balance commercial goods movement with the health and quality of life priorities of the community by routing heavy truck traffic away from residential zones an promoting safety at rail crossings.	SAN PABLO	LAND USE, SAFETY, AIR QUALITY, SOCIAL EQUITY, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
Amend the Zoning Ordinance of [city, county] to establish "green" parking design standards that have multiple benefits, such as shared parking for mixed use projects, photovoltaic panels on parking structures to generate energy for parking lot lighting, landscaping and trees in surface parking, and pervious paving to improve groundwater recharge and promote innovative surface parking design that avoids the appearance of a "sea of asphalt" and reduces environmental impacts.		LAND USE, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES, CLIMATE CHANGE
[City, county] shall coordinate, to the extent possible, upgrades and repairs to roadways with utility needs, infrastructure upgrades, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements.		LAND USE, SAFETY, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

[City, county] shall create incentives for developers and employers to offer transit passes incentives for employees and residents		AIR QUALITY, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL EQUITY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE
[City, county] shall implement a “dig once” policy to reduce costs and impacts on public right of way. The policy shall apply to infrastructure, utilities, and broadband whenever possible		LAND USE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL EQUITY
[City, county] shall incorporate water conservation strategies, stormwater management, and heat protection strategies in to infrastructure maintenance where possible.		<u>LAND USE</u> , SAFETY, AIR QUALITY, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES, CLIMATE CHANGE

Housing Element

Introduction

Providing adequate housing for all residents is a priority for cities and counties throughout California, and includes many considerations. The housing element implements the declaration of State law that “the availability of housing is a matter of vital statewide importance and the attainment of decent housing and a suitable living environment for all Californians is a priority of the highest order.” Because of this, provisions in the housing element are more specific and directive than other elements, and contain detailed guidance and reviews. Housing element updates must be consistent with other general plan elements, including the [land use](#) element and diagrams, and should be considered

concurrently. Integrating considerations of general plan goals and policies through the housing element and each update may improve efficiency by ensuring consistency. Additionally, incorporating a holistic view of the document will allow the housing element to compliment other elements in addressing challenges such as [climate change](#) considerations, and working towards local goals, such as promoting [infill](#) development, TODs, [healthy communities](#), and [equity](#).

Periodic updates assure that local governments “will prepare and implement housing elements....toward the attainment of the state housing goal.” This critical role is underscored by mandatory review and certification of housing element updates by a State agency ([Department of Housing and Community Development - HCD](#)), along with annual reports submitted to HCD. The housing element is to be prepared for a prescribed planning period, within the longer-term horizon of the general plan, every four, five or eight years



depending on various factors. ([Gov. Code §65588](#)). See the Department’s website for a [schedule of statutory deadlines](#).

The GPG directs readers to HCD for detailed information on requirements for the housing element through links embedded in the headers and text. As the housing element has more precise requirements than many other elements, users should consult the detailed requirements for each section, including specificity and timelines, required by HCD by clicking on the provided links to get further assistance, assure compliance, and examine samples and resources.

Correlations among Elements

	Land Use	Circulation	Conservation	Open Space	Noise	Safety
Housing	●	■	■	■	■	■

● Identified in statute ■ Closely related to statutory requirements

Required Contents

State law requires the housing element to address particularly detailed statutory requirements. For more information on these requirements, see the Department of Housing and Community Development’s (HCD’s) [website](#). A housing element must generally include the following parts, which are described in further detail below and through links:

- Review of previous element if applicable
- Housing needs assessment
- Inventory and analysis of adequate sites
- Analysis of potential governmental and non-governmental constraints
- Housing policies and programs
- Quantified objectives

Housing element law also requires jurisdictions to analyze both governmental and non-governmental barriers to housing development and include programs to mitigate or remove those barriers. These barriers include entitlement processing, fees, land assemblage, development standards such as parking, and needed infrastructure improvements.

The broad yet detailed scope of the housing element requires a strong relationship to other elements of the general plan, and linkages between sections should be taken in to consideration. The housing element should integrate [community health](#), [climate change](#), and other considerations affecting and affected by housing throughout each section. More information on additional considerations is presented at the end of this chapter.

Public Engagement:

Housing issues affect the entire community – residents, employers and the public and private sectors. The public participation requirement of housing element law presents an opportunity to engage constituents in a dialogue – defining problems and creating solutions. Housing issues can be confusing, and are often misunderstood or contentious. Topics such as density and affordable housing can divide communities who feel excluded from the process. The inclusion of community stakeholders, including residents, in the housing element public participation process helps ensure that appropriate housing strategies are more efficiently and effectively evaluated, developed, and implemented. An inadequate public participation process may lead to community conflict or in worse case scenarios, anti-development initiatives. Successful public participation is important because a diverse cross section of the population can be engaged in defining the housing problem and in crafting community sensitive solutions. The jurisdiction must make a diligent effort to include all economic segments of the community and/or their representatives in the development, adoption and implementation of the housing element update, including low and moderate income households. Public engagement strategies to address multiple communities are outlined in [Chapter 3](#) of the GPG. The element must document how outreach and public engagement is carried out, from planning through implementation. This documentation should include current and future plans to involve varied members of the community in the full process.

Review and Revise:

The review and revise requirement is an important feature of the housing element update. A review facilitates a comprehensive update and ensures the element can be effectively implemented in the next planning period. Review and revise requires analysis in three areas:

Progress in implementation: A description of the actual results or outcomes of the prior element's goals (i.e., what happened), objectives, policies, and programs. The results should be quantified where possible (e.g., number of units rehabilitated) and may be qualitative where necessary (e.g., mitigation of governmental constraints)

Effectiveness of the element: For each program, the analysis must evaluate the effectiveness in achieving the objectives such as analyzing differences between what was projected or planned in the earlier element and what was achieved

Appropriateness of goals, objectives, policies and programs: A description of what has been learned based on the analysis of progress and effectiveness of the previous element. A description of how the goals, objectives, policies, and programs in the updated element are being changed or adjusted to incorporate what has been learned from the results of the previous element.

General Plan Consistency:

The goals, policies, and objectives and various accompanying analyses and text of the housing element must be reviewed in the context of the rest of the elements of the general plan such the land-use, circulation, and open space elements. The element must include a discussion of how internal consistency within the general plan has been achieved and how internal consistency will be maintained throughout the planning period. If appropriate, other elements may need to be updated concurrently with the housing element.

Coastal Zone Requirements:

To assist a locality's determination of whether the affordable housing stock in the coastal zone is being protected and provided as required by Section 65590, the element must contain data on the new construction, demolition, conversion and replacements housing units for low- and moderate-income households [within the coastal zone](#):

Based on this analysis, localities should consider appropriate programs to provide incentives and regulatory concessions in order to preserve housing for low- and moderate-income households within the coastal zone.

Internal Consistency in Updates

Updates to other sections of the general plan often require a review of [land use](#), with consideration to the potential impacts to existing housing stock and the housing element land inventory. For example, should the update of these elements demonstrate that certain parcels within the community will not be able to be developed or require significant mitigation; the sites inventory of the housing element should be updated to reflect these constraints. As a result, new parcels to accommodate the RHNA may need to be identified.

[Land Use Element](#): Gov Code Section 65302.10.(a) requires that each city and county review and update the land use element of its general plan, based on available data, including, but not limited to, the data and analysis developed pursuant to Section 56430, of unincorporated island, fringe, or legacy communities inside or near its boundaries.

[Safety and Conservation Elements](#): Gov Code Section 65302 requires amendment of the safety and conservation elements of the general plan to include analysis and policies regarding flood hazard and management information. In addition, the safety element must be updated to analyze risk and include policies for the protection of the community from any unreasonable risks associated with the effects of wildland and urban fires.

See page 7 of 2010 DWR Handbook: NOTE: 1) Does this Safety Element section include reference to Central Valley Flood Protection Board review? (2007 flood legislation) 2) Does this Safety Element section include reference to Local Hazard Mitigation Plan requirement? (2006 flood legislation)

Analysis of Existing Housing Needs

Requirement Description:

An assessment of existing housing needs must include an analysis of population and employment trends and documentation of projections and a quantification of the locality's existing and projected housing needs for all income levels, including extremely low-income households ([Government Code Section 65583\(a\)\(1\(and \(2\)\)](#)). The assessment must also include an analysis of household characteristics such as tenure (whether renting or owning) and overpayment; housing characteristics such as overcrowding; and housing stock conditions. The purpose of the assessment is to evaluate existing housing needs to formulate appropriate policies and programs. In the formulation of policies and programs, the assessment can also be combined with other areas of the housing element such as evaluation of past programs and comments through public participation. An assessment of housing needs can utilize a variety of quantitative and qualitative information and should use current information when available. An assessment may also evaluate trends over time and consider information or maps at a neighborhood level to better formulate appropriate policies and programs to address existing housing needs in the planning period. Items that must be included, as well as links to more information on each, are discussed below. The [HCD website](#) includes detailed information on housing elements as well as examples, tools, and resources for updating the element. As with all elements of the general plan, the required items provide a base, and jurisdictions can add other considerations as appropriate for their community.

Population and Employment:

In order to understand and prepare for the housing needs of a community, population trends and demographics, including employment trends and needs, must be assessed. The analysis should include current population and employment industry trends, using the [most recent Census data](#) available; comparisons in growth rates to countywide and regional rates; and analysis of population by age and other demographic

Neighborhood-based Policies and Programs: Some jurisdictions will evaluate household and housing characteristics at a neighborhood level to target funding and other programs. For example a jurisdiction could evaluate housing conditions at a neighborhood level to target revitalization efforts or consider tenure and income to better utilize resources for conserving and improving affordable housing stock.

characteristics. Employment analysis must examine shifts and anticipated shifts in employment and the potential impact on the housing market; identification of large employers, job types, and earnings; and analysis of potential methods for improving job-housing relationships.

Existing Housing Needs, Including [Extremely Low-income Households](#):

The element must include a description of existing households by income level, including a specific quantification and analysis of extremely low-income (ELI) households, defined as households with income at 30% or below of area median. Analysis of existing housing needs should include an estimate of existing and projected households with ELI, as well as proposed actions to address identified needs.

The analysis should assess the resources available to address the housing need, such as the kind of housing available and suitable for ELI households (including Supportive Housing and Single-Room Occupancy [SROs] units) and whether existing zoning permits those housing types.

ELI households often need additional assistance outside of market mechanisms, and may require specific housing solutions such as deeper income targeting for subsidies; housing with supportive services; single-room occupancy (SRO's) and/or shared housing; and rent subsidies (vouchers).

Housing and Household Characteristics

Housing and household characteristics must be assessed in line with population and employment to determine current and future needs for homes available to renters and owners. A quantification and analysis of household characteristics addresses the number of households and trends and evaluates various factors such as tenure and the level of payment compared to their gross income or the ability to pay (overpayment).

An analysis of [overpayment](#) must identify and analyze the number of lower-income households, by tenure, paying more than 30 percent of their gross income for housing and the number of households who pay 50 percent or more of their gross income for housing, and, where possible, identify households most significantly impacted by cost burdens (large families, seniors, etc.). The analysis should also identify potential resources and programs to address the need.

A quantification and analysis of housing characteristics must address [housing stock conditions](#) and [overcrowding to help determine housing need, potential health impacts, and possible reduction of affordable housing](#). The analysis can also address a variety of characteristics related to housing such as housing units by type (e.g., single family, multifamily, manufactured housing) and their conditions, housing units by age, vacancy rates, rent and sales prices, and the development patterns of the housing stock by various characteristics.

Data for the housing needs assessment may be obtained from many sources. The [US Census, American Community Survey \(ACS\)](#), the [Department of Finance](#) and [Employment Development Department](#) are the most common data sources for population and employment trends. These data sources can also be used to quantify the number of those living in overcrowded housing conditions, as well as those overpaying for housing. Overpayment data may also be found by utilizing HUD's [Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy \(CHAS\)](#) data. Data for at-risk housing can be found via the [California Housing Partnership Corporation \(CHPC\)](#), and data on housing stock conditions may be found by using local sources like a windshield survey or local building department. Many of these data sources are available in one comprehensive site via our [GPG mapping tool](#). Jurisdictions should augment the tool with additional data available locally.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of Analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>

Analysis of [Projected Housing Needs](#)

Requirement Description:

The housing element process begins with HCD allocating a region's share of the statewide housing need to the appropriate Councils of Governments (COG) based on Department of Finance population projections and regional population forecasts used in preparing regional transportation plans ([Government Code Section 65583\(a\)\(1\)](#)). The COG develops a Regional Housing Need Plan (RHNP) allocating the region's share of statewide need to the cities and counties within the region. The RHNP is generally required to promote objectives that align with the state's priorities, including increasing the housing supply and the mix of housing types, tenure, and affordability in all cities and counties within the region in an equitable manner; promoting infill development and socioeconomic equity, the protection of environmental and agricultural resources, the encouragement of efficient development patterns; and promoting improved intraregional relationship between jobs and housing. The RHNP should align with the regions sustainable communities strategy (SCS), utilizing infill development plans, development around transit and active transportation, and other policies to reduce GHG emissions and enhance sustainability.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of Analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>

Analysis of [Special Housing Needs](#)

Requirement Description:

Statutes require an analysis of specific categories of persons with special housing needs, including the [elderly](#); [persons with disabilities, including developmental disabilities](#); [large families \(households with 5 or more persons\)](#); [farmworkers](#); [families with female heads of households](#); and [families and persons in need of emergency shelters](#). Each of these analyses must include detailed quantitative and qualitative data, including estimates of the number of persons in each category, discussions of available and needed resources, identification of housing types and numbers, and analysis of specific needs for identified categories ([Government Code Section 65583\(a\)\(7\)](#)).

Additional considerations and categories should be identified by each community and analyzed as appropriate. These may include transitional housing, assisted living, homelessness, and any other special housing needs specific to the jurisdiction. Consideration of homelessness specifically may affect estimates of needed housing. [The need for emergency shelter](#) must be assessed based on annual and seasonal need, and may be reduced by the number of supportive housing units that are identified in an adopted 10-year plan to end chronic homelessness. To be credited toward the need, these supportive housing units must be either vacant or have funding identified for construction during the planning period.

For assistance with the analysis of housing needs, including a discussion of resources such as existing housing, services and needs, cities and counties should contact local service providers. These include continuum of care providers, local homeless shelter and service providers, food programs, operators of transitional housing programs, local drug and alcohol program service providers, county mental health and social service departments, local Salvation Army, Goodwill Industries, churches and schools. Additional information on local services and needs may also be available by contacting one of 15 countywide Designated Local Boards certified by the HCD’s Emergency Housing and Assistance Program.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social,	<i>Intent of Analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
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Economic, or Environmental Related		

Sites [Inventory and Analysis](#)

Requirement Description:

Local governments must prepare an inventory of land suitable for residential development, including both vacant and non-vacant sites, and an analysis of the relationship of zoning and public facilities and services to these sites ([Government Code Section 65583\(a\)\(3\) and 65583.2](#)). The inventory must address the following components: [Inventory of Land Suitable for Residential Development:](#)

The land inventory must identify specific sites suitable for the development of housing within the planning period that are sufficient to accommodate the jurisdictions share of the regional housing need for all income levels. Land suitable for residential development includes vacant sites zoned for residential use, vacant sites zoned for nonresidential use that allow residential development, residentially zoned sites capable of being developed at a higher density, and sites zoned for nonresidential use that can be redeveloped for, and as necessary, rezoned for, residential use. The inventory may also list sites by characteristics such as city owned, proximity to services and amenities, infill and equity opportunity areas, transit and other priority development areas and areas potentially eligible for CEQA streamlining. See [Pub. Resources Code sections 21094.5, 21155.1-21155.4](#); [CEQA Guidelines section 15183.3](#)

Analysis of [Sites and Zoning:](#)

Targeting Opportunity Sites: One purpose of the site listing is to allow the housing element to function as a working land use document, showing the community and developers where the City intends to target its growth and accommodate households for all income levels. Some jurisdictions identify sites by various characteristics to focus evaluation, resources, incentives and other actions to promote their intended use. For example, some jurisdictions may denote sites within priority development areas, transit priority areas, downtown areas, city-owned sites, areas meeting proximity criteria for funding (e.g., distance to amenities, infill, etc.)

The site specific listing must be accompanied by analysis to demonstrate that the land is suitable for development in the planning period and sites and zoning are sufficient and appropriate to accommodate the jurisdiction's share of the regional housing need for all income levels. This analysis should include whether the impacts of a [changing climate](#) will affect the suitability of sites and zoning by subjecting sites to risks such as flooding, seismic activity, etc. More information on these risks can be found in the [safety](#) and [climate change](#) chapters.

The site inventory and analysis must be [consistent](#) with the [land use](#) element and accompanying diagram. Analysis of sites coordinated with other elements of the general plan, including land use, [circulation](#), [safety](#), and [open space](#), will help jurisdictions identify potential co-benefits toward their local goals. For example, identifying sites for higher density, mixed income, or low income housing near transit centers, active transportation routes, employment centers, services, or parks, may promote [health](#) and [economic development](#), reduce GHG emissions and [climate change](#) impacts, and assist in affordability and quality of life.

Zoning for a Variety of Housing Types:

The analysis of sites must indicate whether the inventory can provide for a variety of housing types, including multifamily rental housing, factory-built housing, mobilehomes, housing for agricultural employees, transitional and supportive housing, single-room occupancy units and emergency shelters. Providing development opportunities for a variety of housing types promotes diversity in housing price, style and size, and contributes to neighborhood stability by offering more affordable and move-up homes and accommodating a diverse income mix. Additionally, needs for housing types vary among jurisdictions, from high density needs in urban areas to smaller scale mid density rental housing, additional dwelling units, and other housing types in suburban and rural areas. Determining the analysis of a variety of housing types must account for a number of specific factors. This includes identification of zoning districts where each of the housing types are permitted, discussion of how development standards and processing requirements facilitate development of each of the housing types; and a description of capacity and its suitability to accommodate development or improvement opportunities

In addition, the statute provides flexibility to local governments in identifying sites to accommodate their share of the regional housing need.

Alternative Adequate Sites:

Local governments can address up to 25 percent by income group of their adequate sites requirement, under prescribed conditions, including units that are substantially rehabilitated, converted from market-rate to affordable, or where the affordability of certain multifamily housing units are preserved.

Second Units:

Local governments can address a portion of their adequate sites requirement through the provision of second units based on a number of factors including the number of second units developed in the prior planning period, community need and resources and/or incentives available that will encourage their development.

Jurisdiction’s may also use other alternatives to accommodate the regional housing need including units constructed since the beginning of the planning period, motel conversions, potential for manufactured housing on rural lots and sites with permanent housing on military bases undergoing closure or conversion.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of Analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>

Identification of Zoning for Emergency Shelters

Requirement Description:

Every jurisdiction must identify a zone or zones where emergency shelters are allowed as a permitted use without a conditional use or other discretionary permit [Government Code Section 65583\(a\)\(4\)](#)). The identified zone(s) must include sufficient capacity to accommodate the need for emergency shelter as identified in the housing element, EXCEPT that each jurisdiction must identify a zone(s) to accommodate at least one year-round shelter. Adequate sites can include sites with existing buildings that can be converted to accommodate need. Shelters may only be subject to development and management standards that apply to residential or commercial development in the same zone. However, local governments may apply written and objective standards that include maximum number of beds, off-street parking based upon demonstrated need, size and location of on-site waiting and intake areas, provision of on-site management, proximity to other shelters, length of stay, lighting, and security during hours when the shelter is open.

For more information, see the HCD’s [technical assistance on zoning for emergency shelters](#).

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of Analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>

Analysis of Governmental and Non-governmental Constraints

Requirement Description:

Governmental: The element must describe and analyze governmental constraints for impacts on housing such as costs, supply and approval timing and certainty ([Government Code Section 65583\(a\)\(5\) and \(6\)](#)). This analysis must include constraints in [land use controls](#),

[codes and enforcement](#), on and off site improvement requirements, [fees and exactions](#), [processing and permit procedures](#), and [housing for persons with disabilities](#). Other governmental constraints specific to localized areas should also be addressed as appropriate.

The analysis of potential governmental constraints must describe past or current efforts to remove them. Where the analyses identifies that a constraint exists, program responses to address and mitigate or remove its effects should be included in the element.

Ordinances, policies, procedures, or measures imposed by the local government that specifically limit the amount or timing of residential development should be analyzed as a potential governmental constraint and mitigated where necessary. The analysis will vary depending on the nature of the measure. In general, the measure and its implementation procedures should be specifically described and analyzed as to the impact on the cost and supply of housing.

Non-governmental: The housing element must include an analysis of non-governmental constraints, including land prices, construction costs, and financing availability. Although nongovernmental constraints are primarily market-driven and generally outside direct government control, localities can significantly influence and offset the negative impact of nongovernmental constraints through responsive programs and policies.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of Analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>

Analysis of Energy Conservation Opportunities

Requirement Description:

The [energy conservation](#) section of the element must inventory and analyze the opportunities for energy conservation in residential development such as energy saving features, energy saving materials, and energy efficient systems and design for residential development ([Government Code Section 65583\(a\)\(8\)](#)). Planning to maximize energy efficiency and the incorporation of energy conservation and green building features can contribute to reduced housing costs for homeowners and renters, in addition to promoting sustainable community design. Such planning, development, and building standards can also significantly contribute to reducing greenhouse gases. Updated policies and programs can address a variety of factors related to energy conservation and even broader environmental goals such as climate change by highlighting the environmental significance and operational benefits of employing energy conservation in the building and retrofit of decent, safe and affordable housing.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of Analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>

Analysis of Assisted Housing At-risk of Converting to Market Rate Uses

Requirement Description:

The element must include a project inventory of [assisted housing](#) that could be converted to market rate rents because of expiration of affordability restrictions in mortgage and/or rental subsidy contracts ([Government Code Section 65583\(a\)\(9\)](#)). Thousands of publicly assisted housing units in California are eligible to change from low-income to market-rate housing during the next decade due to the termination of various government subsidy

programs and/or restrictions on rental rates. These units, known as at-risk units, are a valuable source of affordable housing for families statewide and as a result, the housing element must include a detailed analysis and proactive policies and programs to preserve these at-risk units. The at-risk analysis must prepare an inventory of all units at-risk of conversion within 10 years of the beginning of the housing element planning period, assess the conversion risk, estimate and analyze the costs of replacement versus preservation for units at-risk in the current five-year planning period, identify entities qualified to preserve at-risk units, and specify financing and subsidy resources.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of Analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>

Quantified Objectives

Requirement Description:

Quantified objectives must establish the maximum number of housing units by income category that can be constructed, rehabilitated, and conserved over a five-year time period (Government Code Section 65583(b)).

Housing Programs

Requirement Description:

Local governments have the responsibility to adopt a program that implements the policies, goals and objectives of the housing element through their vested powers, particularly over land use and development controls, regulatory concessions and incentives, and the utilization of financial resources. SB 375 amended sections of housing law to include specific

requirements, including timelines and consequences, referenced in these guidelines and described [here](#).

Programs are the specific action steps the locality will take to implement its policies and achieve its goals and objectives. Programs must include a specific time frame for implementation to have a beneficial impact toward the goals and objectives during the planning period. Programs must also identify the agencies or officials responsible for implementation. Effective program descriptions also include immediate, short-term and long-term action steps, proposed measurable outcomes, objectives or performance measures, and specific funding sources, where appropriate ([Government Code Section 65583\(c\)](#)).

All housing elements must include programs to address the following six areas:

Adequate Sites: The sites inventory must demonstrate adequate site capacity with appropriate zoning to accommodate the regional housing need for all income groups. Where the

analysis of a local government's sites inventory does not demonstrate sufficient suitable and appropriately zoned sites to accommodate the regional housing need by income level, the element must include a program to make sites available during the planning period with appropriate zoning and development standards including meeting specific statutory requirements such as permitting residential development without discretionary action and providing sites zoned for owner occupied and rental multifamily residential uses by right. In addition, sites shall be identified as needed to facilitate and encourage the development of a variety of types of housing for all income levels, including multifamily rental housing, factory-built housing, mobilehomes, housing for agricultural employees, emergency shelters,

Beneficial Impact: Programs must have a schedule of actions, each with a timeline, to have a beneficial impact on the goals and objectives of the housing element within the planning period. The purpose of the clarification is to ensure program effectiveness in addressing housing needs in the planning period to better assist in meeting the housing objectives, including the objectives of SB 375. Programs must include a definitive date or deadline, or benchmarks for implementation early enough in the planning period to realize "beneficial impacts" and successful program implementation within the planning period.

and transitional and supportive housing. In coordination with other general plan elements, aligning siting of adequate sites with goals can help communities improve outcomes, such as promoting [infill](#) development to address affordability, [climate change](#), and [community health](#) issues.

[Assist in the development of adequate housing to meet the Needs of Extremely Low-, Low- and Moderate-income Households](#): Having assessed and identified the housing needs of extremely low-, very low-, low-, and moderate-income households, including special needs households, localities must employ a sufficient number of strategies to assist in developing adequate housing to meet those needs. To address this requirement, localities can utilize a variety of methods such as proactive outreach with the development community, assisting with funding and land acquisition, streamlining entitlement processes and providing concessions and incentives for development. Jurisdictions may also prioritize funding for certain income levels and special needs and focus efforts in priority growth areas.

[Address and Remove Governmental Constraints](#): For each policy, procedure or requirement identified as a governmental constraint, the element must include programs to address and remove or mitigate the constraint.

Innovation in Affordable Housing and Regional Housing Needs

Piedmont ADU ordinance example—waiting on text approval from planning department

[Conserve and Improve the Condition of the Existing Affordable Housing Stock](#): The existing affordable housing stock is a valuable resource and the element must include programs to conserve and improve the existing affordable housing stock. Improvement includes physical activities that improve the housing stock such as rehabilitation. Conservation includes both maintenance activity such as code enforcement in deteriorating buildings or in response to complaints and improvements to the housing stock such as weatherization programs which help reduce housing costs or other actions, policies or programs to conserve the affordability of housing such as a mobilehome park preservation ordinance.

The housing element can be a tool to identify and address displacement issues by including policies and programs to replace lost affordable housing, encourage new opportunities, provide rental subsidies to existing families, and increase the competitiveness of affordable housing development through removal of governmental barriers, assisting with land

assemblage, developing a land banking program, or requiring a set-aside for below market rate units.

Gentrification and Displacement: The opportunity to promote infill and transit oriented development (TOD) can place significant gentrification and displacement pressures on existing lower income residents; potentially exacerbating the challenge to address important planning objectives such as climate change. In these circumstances, programs and policies to address gentrification and displacement issues may be appropriate such as policies and programs to prioritize the preservation and creation of housing affordable to lower-income households in TOD and infill areas. HCD has compiled a set of [best practices](#) to prevent gentrification and displacement.

[Promote Housing Opportunities for All Persons:](#)

Since State and federal laws uniformly outlaw most kinds of housing discrimination, the local government's role is to identify program strategies that support and implement these laws and affirmatively further housing opportunities for all persons. Such strategies may include consultation with fair housing and counseling organizations in the community to document the incidence of housing discrimination, evaluation of the availability of services and identification of opportunities to promote housing and community development choices throughout the community. At minimum, a local equal housing opportunity program must provide a means for the resolution of local housing

discrimination complaints and commitment to disseminate fair housing information and information about housing resources throughout the community.

[Preservation of Units At-risk of Converting to Market Rate Uses:](#) The nature of conversion risk varies significantly among projects depending on the type of subsidy and related affordability controls. When units are identified at-risk, the element must include actions to preserve the units such as monitoring, assisting with funding, outreach with developers, meeting noticing requirements and actions to assist tenants. Individual program responses should be tailored to the results of the analyses and specific local situations.

Other Considerations

Climate Change

Development patterns influence greenhouse gas emissions expended in the transportation sector via proximity and connectivity of jobs and housing. Residential development occupies the largest share of land use, affecting the regional development footprint and travel patterns. Siting housing near services, transportation options, and jobs increases the effectiveness of a multi-modal transportation system. The location of housing can affect transportation in a number of ways, including, for example, through proximity to employment and service centers, enabling less driving and reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, preserving agricultural and forested lands, and enhancing environmental sustainability. Further, when affordable housing is not available near jobs, people may have to commute long distances, generating high rates of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and GHG emissions.

Denser forms of development can *increase* the effectiveness of these relationships, while *reducing* travel time, travel costs, and the GHG emissions responsible for elevating the risks of climate change. Relaxed development standards and zoning requirements, e.g., smaller footprint and parking requirements, mixed uses, innovative ownership strategies and higher densities typical of affordable housing development, are strategies that contribute to more efficient development patterns.

Transit accessibility is important for housing, jobs, and the environment. Transit hubs record highest levels of ridership within a quarter to half-mile radius. Studies reveal that public transit ridership drops off dramatically after a distance of four miles from transit stations, particularly for those commuting to and from places of employment, as ridership generally depends on variables including quality, frequency of stops and travel time. Lower income households account for nearly one third of all transit riders, and three quarters rely solely on

public transportation. Preserving and increasing housing choice for communities that utilize public transit most will continue to contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions.

As recognized by [SB 375](#), the housing element of general plans is a critical tool in implementing policies and programs that lower GHG emissions and promoting sustainable development. Through the housing element's site's inventory, jurisdictions must plan for where housing development will occur and adopt policies and programs to facilitate the development of housing. The jurisdiction can identify sites and adopt programs that direct growth in areas that promote efficient development patterns and transit use and alternative modes of transportation such as biking or walking. Programs to incentivize development such as mixed-use, affordable housing, and transit oriented development could include flexible development standards, fee reductions, expedited processing, and offer by-right permitting of projects that meet sustainability objectives. In addition, the housing element focuses on opportunities for rehabilitation and preservation of existing housing. This provides an important tool to target housing rehabilitation dollars to preserve older housing stock and achieve various objectives such as energy efficiency, health and transit options.

Finally, the impacts of climate change on housing affordability, insurability and viability must be considered. Utilizing the [Adaptation Planning Guide](#) and [other resources](#) available by the State can help guide this consideration process.

Health

Housing affordability significantly impacts health. Affordable housing can provide increased stability, which allows families more resources for other goods and services, health care needs, and basic necessities such as healthy food. Housing location also affects access to parks, recreation, grocery stores with healthy food, jobs, schools, and other community necessities. Positive health benefits, including decreasing stress-related illnesses associated with long drive times and increased physical activity also result from locating housing thoughtfully. Thus, cities and counties should see the housing element as providing an opportunity to promote health objectives.

Neighborhoods designed to facilitate active transportation - walking, and biking - facilitate weight control and other health benefits. Walkability is influenced by neighborhood design and accessibility to transit, employment, schools, services and recreational opportunities and amenities. "Safe routes to school," for example, is an important benefit for parents and children.

Multifamily housing developments are often used as platforms for integrating healthcare, especially for the elderly. A number of housing developments in major metropolitan areas include health clinics and community spaces, and tenant services for special needs populations such as elderly and disabled. Supportive services have multiple benefits, for both tenants and property management. Integrated service delivery plays a critical role with populations at risk of homelessness or institutionalization.

Given the health impacts of having access to safe, decent, and affordable housing it remains critical that jurisdictions plan for a variety of housing types and communities near schools, transit, and other services. The housing element allows jurisdictions to identify opportunities and adopt policies for housing development that benefits positive health outcomes.

Economic Development

Stable housing is a foundation for family economic well-being and thriving communities. Families in stable housing (adequate, safe and affordable) have more income in their budget available for basic living necessities, such as food, utilities, transportation to and from work, school, day care, and healthcare. Planning housing connected to transit, employment centers, services, schools, and destinations greatly decreases living costs while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

As a communitywide asset, adequate, stable housing boosts the surrounding economy, through increased local spending, employment, and revenues for local governments. Cost of shelter is the largest, non-negotiable expense for most families. When this cost is excessive, families fall behind on rent or mortgage payments, have little or no disposable income, and often go without food, utilities, or healthcare.

Employers and regional economies are at competitive disadvantages without a sufficient supply of affordable housing. A survey of 300 companies found that one in the three reported that the lack of affordable housing nearby impacts the ability to attract or retain qualified entry- and mid-level workers.

The [Location Affordability Index \(LAI\)](#) gives estimates of the percentage of a family's income dedicated to the combined cost of housing and transportation in a given location. The goal of the LAI is to help individuals, planners, developers, and researchers get a more complete understanding of the costs of living in a given location by accounting for variations between households, neighborhoods, and regions, all of which impact affordability.

The housing element is a jurisdiction's primary tool to address issues of overcrowding, rehabilitation, and access to affordable housing opportunities. Through the housing element's public participation process, the jurisdiction has an opportunity to identify those housing issues in the community that are of most concern and include policies and programs to address those concerns.

Education

Affordable Housing is a key ingredient for the educational well-being of families, facilitating educational attainment. Stable and safe housing provides a learning environment. Studies indicate that stable home environments are critical to educational outcomes. Areas of [socioeconomic distress](#) may have additional needs for educational support.

The housing element can provide the linkage between housing and education through identifying key resources and policies to promote safe, decent, stable and affordable housing and educational attainment. For example, the sites inventory of a housing element can identify housing opportunities near schools, libraries, and educational services, promote policies to increase affordable housing opportunities, and encourage affordable housing developments to include essential educational programs. Coordination between housing and local school districts can help achieve mutual goals and benefits.

Infill

Housing that is affordable to a broad range of households and income groups is constrained in many communities. Furthermore, the affordability of rental housing in many markets has gradually deteriorated. [“Infill development”](#) is development on previously-developed land or on parcels surrounded by previously-developed parcels. Infill development can be an attractive option for accommodating growth and providing a mix of housing choices in many communities – particularly as it can result in lower municipal costs for both capital improvements and long-term operations and maintenance as compared to “greenfield” development. Infill development provides an opportunity to revitalize economically-underutilized land, and also conserves resources and provides environmental and health benefits. Infill development also has the potential to reduce GHG emissions to the extent that it spurs more pedestrian activity, increases transit usage, and reduces the number and lengths of trips. Infrastructure and utilities must be able to support the infill envisioned through the general plan so it is important to coordinate planned infill priority areas with Capital Improvement Plans and other infrastructure investment planning.

The sites inventory requirement of the housing element is one opportunity for identifying opportunities for infill development.

[Completeness Checklist](#)

Statutory Citation	Brief Description of Requirement	Location of Required Content, if Relevant	Explanatory Notes
Gov. Code §65583(c)(8)	Public Participation; description of diligent effort to include all economic segments of the community		
Gov. Code §65588	Review and Revise; <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Progress in implementation• Effectiveness of the element• Appropriateness of goals- objectives, policies and programs		
Gov. Code §65583(a)(1 and 2)	Housing Needs Assessment; Quantification and analysis * of existing and projected housing needs Populations and employment trends, including documentation of projections Housing and Household characteristics, including;		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Level of payment compared with ability to pay (overpaying households)• Housing stock conditions• Overcrowded households Existing and projected needs for all income levels, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA)• Existing housing need for extremely low income households• Projected housing need for extremely low income households based on RHNA or Census		
Gov. Code §65583(a)(7)	Persons with Special Needs; Identification and analysis of any special housing needs including:.* <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elderly• Persons with disabilities, including developmental disabilities• Large Households• Farmworkers (seasonal and permanent)• Female headed households• Homeless (annual and seasonal)• Other		
Gov. Code §65583(a)(9)	At-risk Units -Inventory of at-risk units (10 years from the housing element due date) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Estimate of replacement versus preservation costs• Identification of qualified entities• Identification of potential funding		
Gov. Code §65583(a)(5 and 6)	Potential Governmental Constraints Include an analysis of actual and potential governmental constraints for each of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Land use controls• Building codes and their enforcement• Site improvement requirements• Fees and other exactions• Local processing and permit procedures• Housing for persons with disabilities• Transitional housing and supportive housing as a residential use of property and subject only to those restrictions that apply to other residential dwellings of the same type in the same zone		
Gov. Code	Potential Non-governmental Constraints		

§65583(a)(5 and 6)	<p>Include an analysis of actual and potential non-governmental constraints for each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Availability of financing• Price of land• Cost of construction		
Gov. Code §65583 (a) (3) and 65583.2	<p>Sites Inventory and Analysis-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listing of properties by parcel number or other unique, reference showing for each parcel• General description of environmental constraints to the development of housing• General description of infrastructure (planned/available) including water, sewer and other dry utilities, including availability and access to distribution facilities• In determining the number of units on each site, indicate how the number of units was determined.• For Non-vacant sites, specify the additional development potential for each site within the planning period and provide an explanation of the methodology to determine development potential• Demonstration of zoning to accommodate the housing need for lower income households• Map of Sites included in the inventory• Number of units built between the start of the projection period and the deadline for adoption of the housing element• Number of units proposed using alternative provisions such as rehabilitation, conversion, preservation or second units• Identification of zoning for a variety of housing types (Multifamily rental housing, Factory-built housing, Mobilehomes, Housing for agricultural employees, Emergency Shelters, Transitional and supportive housing)• Carryover obligation (AB 1233), if applicable		
Gov. Code §65583(b) and (c)(1 through 6)	<p>Quantified Objectives and Housing Programs- Provide statement of quantified objectives; Maximum number of units, by income group, including extremely low-income of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• new construction;• rehabilitation; and		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• conservation.		
Gov Code §65583(c)	Include programs with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schedule of specific actions;• Timeline for implementation with a beneficial impact in the planning period; and Identification of agencies and officials responsible for implementing each program		
Gov Code §65583(c)(1)	Program(s) providing adequate sites <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Programs to rezone and any other programs needed to address a shortfall of sites to accommodate the regional housing need, if applicable, and any programs included pursuant to Section 65583.2(h) and (i) or carryover obligation pursuant to Section 65584.09• Programs to rezone and any other programs needed to address a shortfall of capacity for housing for farmworkers that could not be accommodated on sites identified in the inventory, if applicable.• If applicable, programs to facilitate a variety of housing types, including multifamily rental, factory-built housing, mobilehomes, housing for agricultural employees, supportive housing, single room occupancy, emergency shelters and transitional and supportive housing		
Gov Code §65583(c)(2)	Programs to assist in the development of housing for extremely low, very low, low and moderate income households		
Gov Code §65583(c)(3)	Programs to address governmental constraints and where appropriate and legally possible, to remove constraints to the maintenance, improvement and development of housing		
Gov Code §65583(c)(3)	Program to remove constraints on housing for persons with disabilities and provide reasonable accommodation for housing for persons with disabilities		
Gov Code §65583(c)(4)	Program(s) to conserve and improve the condition of the existing affordable housing stock		
Gov Code §65583(c)(5)	Program(s) to promote housing opportunities for all persons		
Gov Code §65583(c)(6)	Program(s) to preserve at-risk units		
	Other Requirements		

Gov. Code §65583 (c) (7)	Description of general plan consistency		
Gov. Code §65588	Analysis of construction, demolition and conversion of housing for lower income households in the Coastal Zone		
Gov. Code §65583 (a) (8)	Description of opportunities for energy conservation in residential development		
Gov. Code §65589.7	Water and Sewer Priority See the HCD Memo at http://www.hcd.ca.gov/hpd/memo_sb1087.pdf . *		

OPR Recommended Policies

These policies are an example of recommended policies adopted by varying jurisdictions, to be modified and used as appropriate A full list of recommended policies can be found [here](#)

<i>Sample Policy</i>	<i>Example of Application</i>	<i>Relationship to Other Elements</i>
FOCUS INVESTMENT STRATEGIES AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMS TO DISTRIBUTE MIXED INCOME HOUSING MORE EQUITABLY ACROSS [CITY, COUNTY], TAKING STEPS TO AVOID FURTHER CONCENTRATION OF POVERTY WITHIN AREAS OF THE CITY THAT ALREADY HAVE SUBSTANTIAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING. AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS SHOULD BE LOCATED CLOSE TO COMMUNITY AND RETAIL AMENITIES SUCH AS PARKS, FULL-SERVICE GROCERY STORES, LOCAL PUBLIC TRANSIT STOPS, RETAIL AND PUBLIC SERVICES.	WASHINGTON DC, RICHMOND,	CIRCULATION, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL EQUITY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
[CITY, COUNTY] SHALL ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT OF RESIDENTIAL USES IN STRATEGIC PROXIMITY TO EMPLOYMENT, RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, SCHOOLS, NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL AREAS, AND TRANSPORTATION ROUTES.	LONG BEACH	CIRCULATION, LAND USE, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE

[CITY, COUNTY] SHALL PROMOTE THE USE OF ENERGY CONSERVATION FEATURES IN THE DESIGN OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT TO CONSERVE NATURAL RESOURCES AND LOWER ENERGY COSTS		SOCIAL EQUITY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE
[CITY, COUNTY] SHALL SUPPORT THE CREATION OF HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS BY ADDRESSING PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES, PERFORMING ONGOING PROPERTY INSPECTIONS, ELIMINATING THREATS TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH, AND PROMOTING BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS THAT OFFER HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES		LAND USE, SAFETY, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL EQUITY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
[CITY, COUNTY] SHALL PURSUE A JOBS HOUSING BALANCE BY INCORPORATING EMPLOYMENT, TRANSPORTATION, AND HOUSING DATA INTO PLANNING DECISIONS		LAND USE, CIRCULATION, SOCIAL EQUITY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Conservation Element

Introduction

The conservation element describes the jurisdiction's natural resources; land, water, ecosystem services and living resources, and the benefits that these resources provide to the community. The conservation element establishes goals and policies for their retention, enhancement and development. The [open space element](#) and the [land use element](#) should work in coordination with the conservation element to guide conservation and development, balancing community needs with environmental preservation and the effects of [climate change](#). All three of these mandatory elements must be consistent with the others.

Conservation of natural and agricultural resources is one of the State's three planning priorities ([AB 857 Wiggins](#)), and helps to achieve the State's climate goals. Land conservation policies may have many benefits. Agricultural land conservation can be a foundation for more permanently preserving lands at the edge of cities for their intrinsic open space values. As agricultural activities produce self-sustaining revenue, agricultural conservation can be amongst the most cost-effective means of protecting open space and promoting [infill](#) development. By maintaining a buffer zone between urban developments, agricultural lands can reduce sprawl and help to preserve the unique cultural

Government Code 65302(d):

(d) (1) A conservation element for the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources including water and its hydraulic force, forests, soils, rivers and other waters, harbors, fisheries, wildlife, minerals, and other natural resources. The conservation element shall consider the effect of development within the jurisdiction, as described in the land use element, on natural resources located on public lands, including military installations. That portion of the conservation element including waters shall be developed in coordination with any countywide water agency and with all district and city agencies, including flood management, water conservation, or groundwater agencies that have developed, served, controlled, managed, or conserved water of any type for any purpose in the county or city for which the plan is prepared. Coordination shall include the discussion and evaluation of any water supply and demand information described in Section 65352.5, if that information has been submitted by the water agency to the city or county.

(2) The conservation element may also cover all of the following:

- (A) The reclamation of land and waters.
- (B) Prevention and control of the pollution of streams and other waters.
- (C) Regulation of the use of land in stream channels and other areas required for the accomplishment of the conservation plan.
- (D) Prevention, control, and correction of the erosion of soils, beaches, and shores.
- (E) Protection of watersheds.
- (F) The location, quantity and quality of the rock, sand, and gravel resources.

character of separate municipalities. Prime agricultural lands also help to conserve key environmental values, including quality soil, air, and water. Finally, agricultural lands can provide a critical role in planning strategies to maintain connectivity of conserved lands, successfully preserving wildlife corridors and wetlands.

This section describes the required components of the conservation element, provides links to suggested policies and tools to help communities in their updates and helps to achieve the State’s goals.

Correlations Among Elements

	Land Use	Circulation	Housing	Open Space	Noise	Safety
Conservation	●	■	■	■		●

● Identified in statute ■ Closely related to statutory requirements

Required Contents

The conservation element must address the “conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources including

- Water and its hydraulic force
- Forests
- Soils
- Rivers and other waters
- Harbors and fisheries
- Wildlife
- Minerals, and other natural resources” ([Gov. Code, § 65302\(d\)\(1\).](#))

The Government Code further requires the conservation element to “consider the effect of development within the jurisdiction, as described in the land use element, on natural resources located on public lands, including military installations.” Evaluation of a

jurisdiction's natural resource systems based on sound science and ecological principles is an important first step in preparing the conservation element. One role of the conservation element is to establish policies that reconcile conflicting demands on those resources. In recent years, some jurisdictions have adopted policies related to mitigation banking, conservation easement programs, and the state and federal Endangered Species acts in their conservation elements. Other local jurisdictions have incorporated policies related to regional [greenprints](#) or Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) programs (see www.wildlife.ca.gov/conservation/planning/nccp). Both of these methods present a broad-based approach to the regional protection of plants and animals and their habitats while allowing for compatible and appropriate economic activity. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife, [Department of Conservation](#), [Natural Resources Agency](#), and [Department of Water Resources](#) are some of the many resources available for examining current and future conservation needs. In addition, resource data is available for jurisdictions through the [GPG mapping tool](#). Jurisdictions should assess the current condition of their natural resource systems, the ecological processes and compatibilities upon which they depend and their sustainability based on anticipated uses. Analysis of the sustainability of resource uses should take into account changing burdens on local ecosystems as a result of a changing [climate](#) or other environmental conditions, and should measure the values that these resources contribute to the community and state (see sidebar below on nature's services). In their evaluation of natural resources, municipalities should identify priority areas to conserve that offer the most effective and efficient protection of the natural resource systems, and focus policies on those resources or areas. Greenprints, or sustainability plans seeking to balance conservation with growth, are one example of incorporating "green infrastructure" into General Plans (see more below).

The following sections include descriptions of each of the requirement with links to model policies and useful information. Some of the requirements will not be locally relevant for all communities. For example, a land-locked county with no river ports would likely not need to address harbors in its conservation element. It is up to the jurisdiction to choose how to arrange their treatment of the various required issues, which may overlap with one another when addressed in the conservation element's goals and policies.

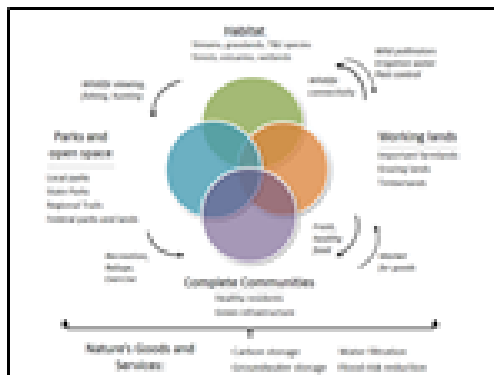
Natural Resources as Nature's Benefits; Greenprints and Conservation

A conservation element can include a quantification and explanation of the benefits that the community obtains from their surrounding ecosystems. Communities' well-being depends on the benefits that nature provides for free, every day and everywhere. For example, we depend on ecosystems such as forests and for clean water, fertile soils, food, fuel, storm protection, minerals and flood control.

These benefits, often called "nature's benefits" are commonly categorized into four broad categories: provisioning, such as the production of food and water; regulating, such as the control of climate and disease; supporting, such as nutrient cycles and crop pollination; and cultural, such as spiritual and recreational benefits. To help inform planning decisions, these benefits can be [assigned economic values](#), values that measure other non-monetary benefits to the community, and values that demonstrate the benefits gained when various natural resources mutually reinforce each other. These benefits and services can be expressed in a "Greenprint," such as those developed under the [federal sustainable communities initiative](#), which can help municipalities and regions to analyze and plan for these cross-cutting and community-supporting benefits in their general plan updates and apply innovative and successful strategies for implementation. For more information on ecosystem services see

<http://www.fs.fed.us/ecosystems-services/>

<http://www.nature.org/science-in-action/ecosystem-services.xml>



* Local governments can dramatically impact the type and amount of water used and conserved within their jurisdictions through land use decisions. For example, requiring more compact development types can significantly reduce per capita water use. Limiting new impervious cover in key recharge areas can protect groundwater supplies. Low impact development strategies can redirect stormwater from sewer lines to recharge areas, and thereby enhance water supplies. [The California Water Plan](#) provides strategies, resources, and tools for water management and conservation throughout the State.

Water and Its Hydraulic Force

Requirement Description:

The discussion of water in the conservation element must be prepared in coordination with “any countywide water agency and with all district and city agencies, including flood management, water conservation, or groundwater agencies that have developed, served, controlled, managed, or conserved water of any type for any purpose in the county or city for which the plan is prepared,” and must include any information on water supply and demand prepared pursuant to [Government Code section 65352.5](#) ([Gov. Code, § 65302\(d\)\(1\).](#))

Specific information must be shared with groundwater agencies. [The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act](#) (SGMA) allows local jurisdictions to customize groundwater plans based on their specific needs. Discussion of water should analyze water needs for domestic, agricultural, ecological and industrial uses, and provide for the conservation of water supplies and protection of aquatic ecosystems as a beneficial use. Land use choices affect water demand long into the future. When evaluating the feasibility of possible land use patterns, municipalities should work with water agencies to consider projected available water resources under a changing climate, and water conservation measures to ensure a sustainable water supply, rather than simply deferring to water agencies to meet any projected demand. Jurisdictions may want to form joint committees to synchronize planning timelines between water and land use, coordinate with local [integrated regional water management plans](#) (IRWM), or consider [using watersheds as their planning area](#) or explicitly acknowledge their relationship to an existing watershed. Smaller urban development footprints (i.e. concentrated development) protects and enhances the watershed, improving water supply, flood management, and water quality. The [California Water Plan](#) currently projects diminishing reliability in water supplies of 3-5% in the next twenty years. Existing water sources may also become less reliable due to climate change and development. The conservation element is inextricably connected to the [land use](#) and [open space](#) elements. The decision in [County of Amador v. El Dorado County Water Agency](#) helps to further clarify the relationship between availability of water and development: “in determining whether and where to permit development, a county must necessarily consider the availability of consumptive water supplies. If additional water supplies are available, growth and development are feasible. Conversely, if that water is not available, growth is necessarily limited.” ([County of Amador v. El Dorado County Water Agency](#) (1999) 76 Cal.App.4th 931,

[951](#)). The Government Code and Water Code additionally require water supply districts to prepare water supply verifications and assessments for some large-scale projects, including subdivisions of over 500 dwelling units. ([Gov. Code, § 66473.7](#); [Water Code §§ 10910-10915](#).) A water supply assessment is intended to play an informational role, and a project may move forward even when a water supply assessment fails to identify sufficient water sources. However, the water supply verification comes at the final approval stage of project development, and a subdivision cannot be approved if adequate water supplies do not exist at this stage. ([Gov. Code, § 66473.7\(b\)\(1\)](#)).

National Flood Insurance Rate Program maps, [Central Valley Flood Protection Board's designated floodway maps](#), dam failure inundation maps, information available from the [California Department of Water Resources](#), [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#), the Federal Emergency Management Agency and historical data on flooding all provide useful information for identifying flood-prone areas for floodwater management purposes. Aspects of floodwater management must also be addressed in the [land use](#) and [safety](#) elements, and local governments may want to consider combining these discussions in their general plans. ([Gov. Code, §§ 65302\(a\), 65302\(g\)\(2\)](#)). Government Code provides further requirements on development in flood hazards zones ([defined in Gov. Code, § 65007\(d\)](#)) in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley. (See, Gov. Code, §§ [65302.9](#), [65860.1](#), [65865.5](#), [65962](#), [66474.5](#).)

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Potential areas subject to flooding</i>	<i>Flood maps</i>

Forests

Requirement Description:

The conservation element must provide for the management, enhancement, protection, and potential modification of the current agriforest practices for wildlife protection, watershed protection, recreation, and aesthetic purposes. Possible topics to address include protection of oak woodlands and urban forests, analysis of possible future development within resource areas, the need for suitable and predicted-to-be suitable habitat management for the mitigation of climate change, precipitation retention for watershed management and attenuation of flood waters, aesthetics, cultural use, commercial value of forests, and of timber resources subject to timberland production zoning (Gov. Code, §§ [51104\(e\)](#), [51110-51119.5](#).)

California's forests are valuable assets and their conservation provides many benefits to the natural and built environments. As trees grow and develop, their value to the forest ecosystem and climate change mitigation increases. Older trees sequester significantly more carbon than young trees and are necessary for nutrient cycles for nitrogen and phosphorous. These nutrients are the most limited and, if not maintained properly, could eventually deplete the soil. Trees and source wood left on site significantly contribute to the abundance of biodiversity and the prevention of habitat loss and displacement. Trees in forest and urban areas act as micro and macro climate buffers by moderating temperatures and moisture.

Conservation of forests should be balanced with the proper action to prevent risk from wildfires (see the [Safety Element](#) for more information). As [climate change](#) persists and temperatures rise, wildfires will continue to grow in size, frequency, and total area burned. Throughout its history, California experienced frequent fires by lightning and burning regimes. These fires were a critical factor in developing the composition, structure, and pattern of vegetation throughout the state's landscapes.

In order to prevent destructive wildfires and restore and maintain resilient landscapes policies should be developed appropriate for local conditions to mitigate potential losses due to wildfire. Policies for mitigating potential losses should also consider approaches to

maintain healthy forests, including: prescribed burns, fuel breaks, wildfire protection zones, forest thinning and grazing. Fuel treatment manipulates and removes fuel to reduce fire intensity with methods such as lopping, chipping, crushing, piling and burning. Fuel treatment is critical to enhance protection of forests as well as develop resilience. As a guiding resource, OPR’s [Fire Hazard Planning Technical Advisory](#) includes a detailed discussion about how to incorporate and comply with the fire hazard requirements in a general plan.

Forest conservation practices also present the opportunity to conserve species in their native habitat. Collaboration with local tribes, resource conservation districts, non-government conservation organizations, and other government entities may help determine the best tools for ecosystem restoration, wildfire prevention, and wildlife habitat enhancement.

The management and protection of forests should take into account anticipated changes in coming decades in temperature, changes in the viability or presence of particular wildlife populations in response to warming trends, and the impact on forestry resources of increased extreme weather events and more intense forest fire seasons. For reference, visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/maps/>.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>

Soils

Requirement Description:

Soils provide the fundamental resources necessary for the production of food, fiber and other agricultural products. Healthy soil resources, rich in soil organic matter, are essential to crop production, watershed functioning, carbon sequestration, and the support of vegetation. Highly productive soil resources that support agricultural production and ecosystem services are a finite resource; thus requiring long-term conservation. [Soil management and conservation practices](#), such as cover cropping, crop rotation, mulching, and nutrient management, may help support healthy soils and conservation goals.

The [Natural Resources Classification System](#) and the [Storie Index](#) provide useful tools for assessing and inventorying farmland soils, as does the [Farmland Mapping & Monitoring Program](#) of the state Department of Conservation. Consultation with the municipality's local [Resource Conservation District](#) may also be helpful in assessing soil resources and in developing policies focused on the management of agricultural soils consistent with the Resource Conservation District's broader agricultural strategy. The conservation element is an appropriate place to identify soils necessary for agricultural production and include policies that promote the conservation of these resources. Preservation of prime agricultural land, and identification of water availability for that land, can be a foundation for improving and maintaining soil while more permanently preserving lands, improving the economy, and preserving biological resources, and should be coordinated with the [land use element](#). Local governments should consider identifying areas for inclusion in [Agricultural Preserves](#) under the Williamson Act. [Gov. Code, § 51200 et seq](#)). Additionally, conservation easements on agricultural lands, working with willing landowners and land trusts, can also serve to protect soil resources and constitute feasible mitigation to lessen impacts on agricultural resources, including highly productive soils. The soils is an appropriate place to identify areas subject to slides and erosion and to include policies focusing on erosion prevention, one of the optional issues listed in Government Code section [65302\(d\)\(2\)](#).

[SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT](#)

	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related		

Rivers and Other Waters

Requirement Description:

The rivers and other waters requirement examines water quality in local bodies of water. As with water and its hydraulic force, any discussion of water in the conservation element must be prepared in coordination with “any countywide water agency and with all district and city agencies, including flood management, water conservation, or groundwater agencies that have developed, served, controlled, managed, or conserved water of any type for any purpose in the county or city for which the plan is prepared,” and must include any information on water supply and demand prepared pursuant to [Government Code section 65352.5](#) ([Gov. Code, § 65302\(d\)\(1\)](#)). Topics to address as applicable include identification of existing and potential water pollution sources, the benefits that these resources provide to the community, opportunities for protection and restoration and of water sources for which reclamation is feasible. Policies should take into account the impacts of future development on water bodies and aim to protect or improve water quality. Preservation of flood plains and innovative methods of flood control, such as making “room for the river,” can have positive benefits for related elements of the plan.

Rivers, lakes, streams, bays, harbors, estuaries, marshes, and reservoirs might be affected by climate change impacts such as decreased snow pack, changes in precipitation, and sea level rise. Certain areas may also be important for groundwater recharge. Municipalities should consider taking these projected impacts into account when planning for the protection of their water bodies.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
	Compliance with total maximum daily load (TMDL)	current loads, expected project impact

Related	regulations	
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Harbors and Fisheries

Requirement Description:

The harbors requirement addresses the development and improvement of port, harbor, and waterway facilities. This sub-element has significant overlap with the circulation element, and may be combined with it at the local government’s discretion. Policies in general plans should be consistent with harbor and port master plans developed under the [California Coastal Act](#) ([Gov. Code, § 30000 et seq.](#))

Fisheries are an important [component](#) of California’s economy, and their careful management ensures their viability into the future. Possible topics to address in the fisheries sub-elements include evaluation of existing and projected future water quality, temperature, and sources of contaminants in bodies of water used for subsistence, recreational, and commercial fishing, expected impacts of [climate change](#) on habitat and [fisheries](#) and policies that protect and rehabilitate those water bodies, and preservation of riparian, tidal, and wetland habitat connected to waterways.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
Social, Economic, or Environmental Related		Expected sea level rise conditions
		Future mean high tide

Wildlife

Requirement Description:

California is home to a diverse array of wildlife, and the conservation element is the appropriate place to provide plans for the protection and preservation of these populations and their habitats. This must include wildlife that is rare, threatened, or endangered species under state and federal law. (See, [Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq](#); [16 U.S.C. § 1531 et seq.](#)) Planning for wildlife habitats should account for current habitats, health of wildlife, projected changes in such habitat due to climate change, wildlife conservation, furthering responsible development and addressing the needs of a growing human population, habitat connectivity and potential threats to such habitat from development pressures, fragmentation and edge effects. The conservation element’s focus on wildlife should be consistent with [State Wildlife Action Plan](#), [California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project](#), Regional Advance Mitigation Plans, conservation plans developed by the state and regional entities, Habitat Conservation Plans (e.g. [California Endangered Species Act \(CESA\)](#), [California Environmental Quality Act Review \(CEQA\)](#), [Lake and Steambed Alteration Program \(LSA\)](#), [Timberland Conservation Program](#), [Natural Community Conservation Planning \(NCCP\)](#), [Conservation and Mitigation Banking](#), [Invasive Species Program](#), [Native Plant Program](#)) and other management plans, and should include **coordination** with other government agencies involved in wildlife preservation. Due to the considerable overlap between habitat lands and agricultural lands, multiple benefits for wildlife and agriculture may be gained by coordinating conservation plans and strategies. The [California Agriculture Vision Document](#) highlights relationships between habitat and agricultural conservation, and presents strategies for conservation of both.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
	Identify specific tools and approaches to restore natural areas to benefit fish and wildlife as part of a sustainable flood	http://www.water.ca.gov/conservationstrategy/cs_new.cfm

	management plan	
	Project impacts on wildlife corridors and migratory pathways	
	Project impacts on critical habitat for listed species	
	Identify need for mitigation of potential noise and light elements	

Minerals and Other Natural Resources

Requirement Description:

Under the Public Resources Code section 2005, minerals “means any naturally occurring chemical element or compound, or groups of elements and compounds, formed from inorganic processes and organic substances, including, but not limited to, coal, peat, and bituminous rock, but excluding geothermal resources, natural gas, and petroleum.” While explicitly not required, local governments may also want to consider geothermal, petroleum, and natural gas in their assessment of their mineral resources as appropriate. The minerals sub-element should inventory mineral resources and locate mineral resources designated by the [State Mining and Geology Board](#) under the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act ([Pub. Resources Code, § 2710 et seq.](#)), and include policies that plan for the protection, use, and development of mineral resources.

‘Other natural resources’ may include agricultural resources, wetlands, air, and energy producing resources. Some municipalities also include paleontological and archaeological resources in this section. Model policies include those that assess [air quality](#) and coordinate with other agencies and jurisdictions to improve it, identify agricultural resources using the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s land inventory and monitoring criteria inventory and include plans for the preservation of wetlands, and inventory energy resources including wind, solar, hydroelectric, and biomass resources. Air quality policies should be consistent with regional [air quality and transportation plans](#).

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>

Floodwater Management

Requirement Description:

To address floodwater management in the conservation element, the city or county should collect information concerning its flood plains and its watershed. DWR has updated its [Best Available Maps](#) to display the latest floodplains. DWR has expanded the floodplains to cover all counties in the State and to include 100-, 200-, and 500-year floodplains for display. OES and DWR have information on past flood and flood levels based on awareness mapping. Local levee districts and resource conservation may also have information to share.

DWR also completed the 2012 [Central Valley Flood Protection Plan](#), as defined in Senate Bill (SB) 5 (2007), which provides a guide for state participation with managing flood risk along the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River. The 2012 [Central Valley Flood Protection Plan](#) (CVFPP) provides data and analysis that include the locations of flood hazard zones; goals, policies, and objectives based on that data and analysis; and feasible implementation measures designed to carry out these goals, policies, and objectives. The CVFPP includes a [Groundwater Recharge Opportunity Analysis](#), which can also be useful in considering waterways and water bodies. This document summarizes the approach and findings of an evaluation of groundwater recharge project types and general locations that could be used to integrate groundwater recharge and groundwater storage with the flood management system for the dual benefits of increasing flood management flexibility and water supply reliability.

DWR also recommends work with applicable agencies to incorporate improvements in flood control channels that provide opportunities for stormwater retention and groundwater recharge, when major upgrades and/or reconstruction may be required when feasible.

For additional data and analysis related to flood safety, see [Safety Element](#). For data and analysis related to identification and annual review of areas subject to flooding, see the [Land Use Element](#).

Optional Issues

Pursuant to [Government Code section 65302\(d\)\(2\)](#) the conservation element may also cover the reclamation of land and waters; prevention and control of the pollution of streams and other waters; regulation of the use of land in stream channels and other areas required for the accomplishment of the conservation plan; prevention, control, and correction of the erosion of soils, beaches, and shores; protection of watersheds; protection of habitat connectivity, and the location, quantity, and quality of rock, sand, and gravel resources. Local governments might choose to integrate these optional issues into their analyses of and policies for the mandatory requirements.

Completeness Checklist

Local agency staff can use the following checklist to help ensure that the draft conservation element addresses all required issues. Please note that use of this checklist is purely advisory, and only contains issues that are legally required to be addressed and the optional issues listed in [Government Code Section 65302\(d\)\(2\)](#). Conservation elements may address additional issues at the discretion of the local government. Because general plan formats may vary, this checklist suggests identifying where the particular government code provision is satisfied.

Statutory Citation	Brief Description of Requirement	Location of Required Content, if Relevant	Explanatory Notes
Gov. Code, §§ 65302(d)(1), 65352.5	Water and its hydraulic force		
Gov. Code, § 65302(d)(3)	Floodwater Accommodation		
Gov. Code, § 65302(d)(1)	Forests		

Gov. Code, § 65302(d)(1)	Soils		
Gov. Code, § 65302(d)(1)	Rivers and other waters		
Gov. Code, § 65302(d)(1)	Harbors		
Gov. Code, § 65302(d)(1)	Fisheries		
Gov. Code, § 65302(d)(1)	Wildlife		
Gov. Code, § 65302(d)(1)	Minerals		
Gov. Code, § 65302(d)(1)	Other natural resources		
Gov. Code, § 65302(d)(2)	Reclamation of land and waters (optional)		
Gov. Code, § 65302(d)(2)	Pollution of streams and other waters (optional)		
Gov. Code, § 65302(d)(2)	Land use in stream channels and other areas (optional)		
Gov. Code, § 65302(d)(2)	Erosion (optional)		
Gov. Code, § 65302(d)(2)	Protection of watersheds (optional)		
Gov. Code, § 65302(d)(2)	Rock, sand, and gravel resources (optional)		

OPR Recommended Policies

These policies are an example of recommended policies adopted by varying jurisdictions, to be modified and used as appropriate. A full list of recommended policies can be found here

<i>Sample Policy</i>	<i>Example Application</i>	<i>Relationship to Other Elements</i>
[CITY, COUNTY] SHALL USE DROUGHT-TOLERANT AND NATIVE PLANTS IN PARKS AND LANDSCAPING		LAND USE, AIR QUALITY, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES,

		CLIMATE CHANGE
[CITY, COUNTY] SHALL DEVELOP DUAL PLUMBING FOR RECYCLED WATER IN NEW COMMERCIAL OR RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS		LAND USE, HOUSING, CLIMATE CHANGE
[CITY, COUNTY] SHALL AVOID CONFLICT BETWEEN AGRICULTURAL AND URBAN LAND USES BY DESIGNATING BOUNDARIES		LAND USE
[CITY, COUNTY] SHALL CREATE AND USE PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEES TO DEVELOP LANDSCAPE-LEVEL GOALS, STANDARDS, AND MEASURES FOR PROTECTING PLANT AND WILDLIFE COMMUNITIES AND SENSITIVE WATERSHEDS.		LAND USE, SAFETY, SOCIAL EQUITY, CLIMATE CHANGE
IT IS THE POLICY OF THE [CITY, COUNTY] TO ESTABLISH A COHERENT AND LOGICAL PATTERN OF URBAN USES THAT PROTECT AND ENHANCE OPEN SPACE AND AGRICULTURAL USES BY PROVIDING A CLEAR AND PERMANENT BOUNDARY FOR URBAN USES WITH THE [CITY, COUNTY]'S PLANNING AREA.	CITY OF LIVERMORE	LAND USE, CIRCULATION, HOUSING, CONSERVATION, SAFETY, CLIMATE CHANGE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Open Space Element

Introduction

"California legislative policy strongly favors the preservation of open spaces[.]" ([Gisler v. County of Madera \(1974\) 38 Cal. App. 3d 303, 307](#); see also [Cal. Const. Art. XIII, § 8](#).)

Together with the conservation element, an open space element identifies areas that provide value in an essentially undeveloped condition and provides a plan to preserve such areas. The conservation element should be used to inform and support both the open space element and the land use element, guiding the identification of resource areas that should remain undeveloped and those that are

appropriate for future development. The open space element reinforces the conservation element by guiding the comprehensive and long-range preservation open space lands that are important to the conservation of the state's natural resources. Open space land is defined as any parcel or area of land or water that is essentially unimproved and devoted to open-space use ([§65560\(b\)](#)). Such lands may provide value related to, among other things, recreation, habitat, biodiversity, wildlife conservation aesthetics, economy, climate change

Government Code § 65561(emphasis added) requires open space:

- "... the preservation of open-space land... is necessary not only for the maintenance of the economy of the state, but also for the assurance of the continued availability of land for the production of food and fiber, for the enjoyment of scenic beauty, for recreation and for the use of natural resources"
- "... discouraging premature and unnecessary conversion of open-space land to urban uses is a matter of public interest and will be of benefit to urban dwellers because it will discourage noncontiguous development patterns which unnecessarily increase the costs of community services to community residents"
- "... the anticipated increase in the population of the state demands that cities, counties, and the state at the earliest possible date make definite plans for the preservation of valuable open-space land and take positive action to carry out such plans by the adoption and strict administration of laws, ordinances, rules and regulations"
- "... in order to assure that the interests of all its people are met in the orderly growth and development of the state and the preservation and conservation of its resources, it is necessary to provide for the development by the state, regional agencies, counties and cities, including charter cities, of statewide coordinated plans for the conservation and preservation of open-space lands."

mitigation and adaptation, flood risk reduction, managed natural resources production, agricultural production, and protection from hazardous conditions.

Because open space issues are broad in nature and overlap those of several elements, consistency among elements must be considered carefully. For example, issues covered in the land use element regarding agriculture, natural resources, recreation, enjoyment of scenic beauty, and public grounds are also subject to consideration in the open space element. The open space element is interrelated to other elements, overlapping with the [conservation](#) element when referring to open space dedicated to the preservation of natural resources and the managed production of resources, the [safety element](#) when considering open space for public health and safety, and the [housing](#) and [land use](#) elements when determining the suitability of sites for future development.

Correlations Among Elements

	Land Use	Circulation	Housing	Conservation	Noise	Safety
Open Space	●	■	■	●	■	●

● Identified in statute ■ Closely related to statutory requirements

Required Contents

The Government Code requires an open space element to contain detailed information about several categories of undeveloped land. Specifically, the open space element must inventory the following broad categories of open space:

- Open space for natural resources
- Open space for managed production of resources
- Open space for outdoor recreation
- Open space for public health and safety
- Open space for military support
- Open space for tribal resources

The inventory must be reflected on maps, and policies must provide for conservation of such areas wherever possible ([Gov. Code § 65562\(a\)](#)). The [General Plan Guidelines Mapping](#)

[Tool](#) is a useful tool to help communities identify existing resources, including natural resources, roads, buildings, and demographics, and develop open space inventories accordingly. The tool pulls data from multiple state and federal sources, and allows supplemental data layers from local jurisdictions. Users can use the tool to map known resources, assets, and needs across their community. Policies must also be coordinated with state and regional plans. [An action plan](#) must be included that will guide implementation and provide for long term preservation of open spaces ([§65564](#)). These specific requirements are described in greater detail below.

Inventory

Requirement Description:

The open space element must contain an inventory of specified categories of land, and the inventory must be illustrated on a map or maps. The inventory must include any parcel in one of the listed categories that: (1) is “essentially unimproved” and (2) designated on any local, regional or state open-space plan. ([Gov. Code § 65560\(b\)\(1\)](#); [Save El Toro Assn. v. Days \(1977\) 74 Cal.App.3d 64.](#)) Note that when deciding whether to include a particular parcel, the parcel need not be completely vacant. The statute calls for inclusion of parcels that are “essentially unimproved.” Also, categories of open space are defined in very broad terms in the statute. Thus, designations in local, regional and state plans need not actually use the words “open space” in order to be included in the inventory. In general, a plan should err on the side of inclusion.

Examples of regional and state plans that could include open space designations include, among others:

Sustainable communities strategies and alternative planning strategies adopted by metropolitan planning organizations in regional transportation plans

Habitat conservation plans (HCP) and natural community conservation plans (NCCP)

Regional greenprints

Regional Conservation Assessments

Regional park district plans

Agricultural lands designated on Department of Conservation farmland maps

The specific categories of open space that must be included in the inventory are set forth below.

Open space for natural resources

Requirement Description:

The inventory must identify open space for natural resources, including, but not limited to:

Areas required for the preservation of plant and animal life, including habitat for fish and wildlife species. Such areas may include:

- Areas designated in Habitat Conservation Plans and Natural Community Conservation Plans
- Critical habitat identified pursuant to the Endangered Species Act
- Conservation easements
- Areas identified in greenprints and Regional Conservation Assessments
- Parks and trails
- Areas designated by federal, state, regional and local agencies and governments as important habitat
- Existing forest and woodland areas set aside for mitigation
- Areas important for habitat connectivity

Areas required for ecologic and other scientific study purposes. Such areas might include preserves, parks and other land used by universities to study agricultural, wildlife habitats, and other natural systems.

Rivers, streams, bays and estuaries; riparian areas; and coastal beaches, lakeshores, banks of rivers and streams, and watershed lands. Virtually all waters within a jurisdiction should be identified in the open space element. Upland areas connected to such waters should also be identified. Such area may be identified in Basin Plans, watershed plans, and other planning documents produced by the State Water Resources Control Board, Regional Water Quality Control Boards, and other regional entities.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended data</i>
Social, Economic, or Environmental Related		

Open Space For Managed Production Of Resources

Requirement Description:

The inventory must include lands that are used for the production, enhancement, or maintenance of natural resources.

Forest lands must be maintained in an efficient way to support the continued cultivation of timberland ([Gov Code §51101, §51102](#)). With an increasing state population these forest areas need to be protected against encroaching development to preserve their ecological services as well as economic vitality. Timberland Production Zones are restricted for the production of timber or compatible use and should not be converted for urban services.

Forest and rangelands information is available from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection’s [California Forest and Range Assessment](#). Information regarding agricultural lands is available from the Department of Conservation’s [maps and inventory](#), [California Protected Areas Database](#), [CCED - California Conservation Easement Database](#), [National Conservation Easement Database \(NCED\)](#), and [Conservation Easements Registry](#).

Many local governments also produce their own information regarding locally important lands.

Areas required for recharge of groundwater basins. Information regarding groundwater recharge should be available from urban water management plans and integrated water

resource management plans. Cities and counties must also confer with any locally designated groundwater sustainability agency ([SGMA](#)).

Bays, estuaries, marshes, rivers and streams which are important for the management of commercial fisheries. Information on fisheries is available from the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Areas containing major mineral deposits, including those in short supply. Information regarding mineral resources should be available from the [Department of Conservation](#).

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>

Open Space For Outdoor Recreation

Requirement Description:

The open space element must reflect open space currently or planned for outdoor recreation. A city or county should consult with any regional park and open space district in identifying such areas. Jurisdictions should inventory existing recreational space, and assess present and future demand based on population, demographic, and development trends. Including existing and planned open space for recreation on the land use map can help coordinate future development with anticipated recreational needs. Recreational facilities should be planned equitably and with accessibility considerations, to ensure underserved communities are included.

Government Code § 65560(b)(3):

- areas of outstanding scenic, historic and cultural value;
- areas particularly suited for park and recreation purposes, including access to lakeshores, beaches, and rivers and streams; and
- areas which serve as links between major recreation and open-space reservations, including utility easements, banks of rivers and streams, trails, and scenic highway corridors

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	Intent of analysis	Recommended Data

Open Space for Public Health and Safety

Requirement Description:

The inventory should include areas that require special management or regulation because of hazardous or special conditions are important to protect or enhance public health.

Government Code 65560(b)(4):

- areas which require special management or regulation because of hazardous or special conditions such as
 - earthquake fault zones,
 - unstable soil areas,
 - flood plains,
 - watersheds,
 - areas presenting high fire risks,
 - areas required for the protection of water quality and water reservoirs and
 - areas required for the protection and enhancement of air quality

Public health benefits from open space, including, clean water, clean air, recreational spaces, natural spaces, farms, ranches, and open spaces conducive to active transportation and healthy lifestyles. Hazardous conditions specifically identified in the statute are listed below. Information about those areas is available through the State of California [Geoportal site](#). Much of the information and policies related to hazards will also be relevant to the [Safety Element](#). For additional ideas on data and analysis, see [Healthy Communities section](#) and [Safety Element](#).

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>

Open Space for Military Support

Requirement Description:

The Open Space element must include considerations for areas adjacent to or related to military activity.

Government Code § 65560(b)(5):

- *areas adjacent to military installations,*
- *military training routes, and*
- *underlying restricted airspace*

OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>

Open Space for Tribal Resources

Requirement Description:

Consultation with the appropriate tribes will be essential to both accurately identify those areas needing protection, as well as protecting the confidentiality of sensitive resources. The [Native American Heritage Commission](#) can help identify the appropriate tribes to engage in consultation. Jurisdictions must consult with Native American tribes during an amendment or update to a general plan ([Gov. Code § 65562.5](#)). The following are categories of open space that should be included in the Open Space Element ([Government Code § 65560\(b\)\(6\)](#)):

Government Code § 65560(b)(6):

- Public land containing any Native American
 - sanctified cemetery,
 - place of worship,
 - religious or ceremonial site, or
 - sacred shrine
- Native American historic, cultural, or sacred site, that is listed or may be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historic Resources pursuant to Section 5024.1
- Tribal consultation is required to determine the level of confidentiality needed (§ 65562.5)

- Public land containing any Native American sanctified cemetery, place of worship, religious or ceremonial site, or sacred shrine. The Native American Heritage Commission can provide access to such information.
- Native American historic, cultural, or sacred site, that is listed or may be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historic Resources pursuant to Section 5024.1.

Before the adoption or any amendment of a city or county's general plan, the city or county must conduct consultations with California Native American tribes that are on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission for the purpose of preserving or mitigation impacts to places, features, and objects described in Section [5097.9](#) and [5097.993](#) of the Public Resources Code that are located within the city or county's jurisdiction. ([Gov. Code § 65352.3a1](#) General Plan review by California Native American tribes)

- From the date on which a California Native American tribe is contacted by a city or county pursuant to this subdivision, the tribe has 90 days in which to request a consultation, unless a shorter timeframe has been agreed to by that tribe. (([Gov. Code § 65352.3a2](#) General Plan review by California Native American tribes)
- Consistent with the guidelines developed and adopted by the Office of Planning and Research pursuant to Section [65040.2](#), the city or county shall protect the confidentiality of information concerning the specific identity, location, character, and use of those places, features and objects. ([Gov. Code § 65352.3b](#) General Plan review by California Native American tribes)

When consulting tribes, refer to Section V of the 2005 [Tribal Consultation Guidelines](#), Supplement to the GPG:

On or after March 1, 2005, local governments must consult with tribes before designating open space, if the affected land contains a cultural place and if the affected tribe has requested public notice under Government Code §65092. The purpose of this consultation is to protect the identity of the cultural place and to develop treatment with appropriate dignity of the cultural place in any corresponding management plan ([Government Code §65562.5](#)). This consultation provision does not apply to lands that were designated as open space before March 1, 2005.

The inventory should include certain areas of tribal resources.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
Social, Economic, or Environmental Related		

Completeness Checklist

Statutory Citation	Brief Description of Requirement	Location of Required Content, if Relevant	Explanatory Notes
Gov. Code § 65563	<u>Long range</u> and comprehensive		
Gov. Code § 65563	plan for <u>preservation</u> and <u>conservation</u> of open space lands, including the following:		
Gov. Code § 65560(b)(1)	<i>Open Space for Natural Resources</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• areas required for the preservation of plant and animal life, including habitat for fish and wildlife species;• areas required for ecologic and other scientific study purposes;• rivers, streams, bays and estuaries; and• coastal beaches, lakeshores, banks of rivers and streams, and watershed lands		
Gov. Code § 65560(b)(2)	<i>Open Space for Managed Production of Resources</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• forest lands, rangeland, agricultural lands (<i>reflecting Department of Conservation agricultural resources maps and inventory</i>) and areas of economic importance for the production of food or fiber;• areas required for recharge of groundwater basins;• bays, estuaries, marshes, rivers and streams which are important for the management of commercial fisheries; and• areas containing major mineral deposits, including those in short supply		
Gov. Code § 65560(b)(3)	<i>Open Space for Outdoor Recreation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• areas of outstanding scenic, historic and cultural value;• areas particularly suited for park and		

	<p>recreation purposes, including access to lakeshores, beaches, and rivers and streams; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• areas which serve as links between major recreation and open-space reservations, including utility easements, banks of rivers and streams, trails, and scenic highway corridors		
Gov. Code § 65560(b)(4)	<p><i>Open Space for Public Health and Safety</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• areas which require special management or regulation because of hazardous or special conditions such as<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ earthquake fault zones,◦ unstable soil areas,◦ flood plains,◦ watersheds,◦ areas presenting high fire risks,◦ areas required for the protection of water quality and water reservoirs and◦ areas required for the protection and enhancement of air quality		
Gov. Code § 65560(b)(5)	<p><i>Open Space for Military Support</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• areas adjacent to military installations,• military training routes, and• underlying restricted airspace		
Gov. Code § 65560(b)(6)	<p><i>Open Space for Tribal Resources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public land containing any Native American<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ sanctified cemetery,◦ place of worship,◦ religious or ceremonial site, or◦ sacred shrine• Native American historic, cultural, or sacred site, that is listed or may be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historic Resources pursuant to Section 5024.1• Tribal consultation is required to determine		

	the level of confidentiality needed (§ 65562.5)		
Save El Toro Assn. v. Days (1977) 74 Cal. App. 3d 64 Gov. Code § 65560(b).	Inventory map of the above lands <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include any parcel is that <i>essentially</i> unimproved (i.e., need not be completely vacant)		
Gov. Code § 65562(a)	Policies provide that open space “must be conserved wherever possible”		
Gov. Code § 65562(b)	Co-ordinated with state and regional plans		
Gov. Code § 65564 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• § 65566• § 65567	Action plan <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires acquisition and disposal of open space to be consistent with the open space plan• Building permits, subdivision maps and zoning must be consistent with the plan• Open-space zoning pursuant to §65910 (e.g., exclusive agriculture zones, large-lot zones, overlay zones for hazards areas, etc.).		

OPR Recommended Policies

These policies are an example of recommended policies adopted by varying jurisdictions, to be modified and used as appropriate. A full list of recommended policies can be found [here](#)

Sample Policy	Example of Application	Relationship to Other Elements

Noise Element

Introduction

Noise surrounds us; it is a constant presence in everyday life. A noisy community can be an excellent indicator of a healthy community: the noise from busy shops, children playing, and public transportation are all signs of a healthy, thriving community. It is also the case that noise is often defined as unwanted sound, surrounding busy transportation corridors, recreational areas, and construction zones. Unwanted sound, however, is often subjective and will vary by community. Unwanted noise near a school will differ from unwanted noise near a commercial business area. Local planning areas will need to keep noise in mind and adopt innovative approaches to minimize exposure to excessive noise.

When considering the proposed development of communities, tradeoffs must be weighed in terms of, at times, paradoxical goals. This is especially evident in consideration of noise, and how to mitigate its effects. The purpose of the noise element is to ensure that a local planning area limits the exposure

Government Code 65302(f):

(1) A noise element that shall identify and appraise noise problems in the community. The noise element shall analyze and quantify, to the extent practicable, as determined by the legislative body, current and projected noise levels for all of the following sources:

(A) Highways and freeways.

(B) Primary arterials and major local streets.

(C) Passenger and freight online railroad operations and ground rapid transit systems.

(D) Commercial, general aviation, heliport, helistop, and military airport operations, aircraft overflights, jet engine test stands, and all other ground facilities and maintenance functions related to airport operation.

(E) Local industrial plants, including, but not limited to, railroad classification yards.

(F) Other ground stationary noise sources, including, but not limited to, military installations, identified by local agencies as contributing to the community noise environment.

(2) Noise contours shall be shown for all of these sources and stated in terms of community noise equivalent level (CNEL) or day-night average level (Ldn). The noise contours shall be prepared on the basis of noise monitoring or following generally accepted noise modeling techniques for the various sources identified in paragraphs (1) to (6), inclusive.

(3) The noise contours shall be used as a guide for establishing a pattern of land uses in the land use element that minimizes the exposure of community residents to excessive noise.

of the community to excessive noise levels in noise-sensitive areas and at noise-sensitive times of day.

Correlations among Elements

	Land Use	Circulation	Housing	Conservation	Open Space	Safety
Noise	■	●	■		■	

● Identified in statute ■ Closely related to statutory requirements

Required Contents

The noise element should cover the issues and sources of noise relevant to the local planning area. The element should utilize the most accurate and up-to-date information available to reflect the noise environment, stationary sources of noise, predicted levels of noise, and the impacts of noise on local residents. It should be as detailed as necessary to describe the local situation and offer solutions to local noise issues.

In 1976, the Department of Health Services issued the first Noise Element Guidelines pursuant to [Health and Safety Code §46050.1](#), followed shortly thereafter by a model noise ordinance. In 1984, revisions to the general plan statutes made extensive changes to the noise element requirements (Chapter 1009, Statutes of 1984). These revisions shortened the list of issues required by statute and gave flexibility to local governments in analyzing the issues and subjects pertinent to the local planning area.

The Department of Health Services Office of Noise Control no longer exists, but the principles developed and referenced herein are still valid and widely in use statewide. In 2014, Governor Brown signed legislation to allow the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to update the noise element guidelines of [Government Code section 65302 \(f\)](#), since the Office of Noise Control is defunct. (([Gov. Code section 65302 \(f\)](#) *Amended by Stats. 2014, Ch. 201, Sec. 8. Effective January 1, 2015.*) OPR may update the noise element

guidelines in the near future. The existing Noise Element Guidelines are in [appendix D](#), and may be used in addition to this chapter to develop noise elements.

Local governments should keep in mind that some development goals, such as [infill](#), may create noisier places that are louder but acceptable. The hubbub of a busy street may be pleasant to some people.. Noise mitigation measures are especially important in [infill](#) areas. Louder outdoor areas such as parks, school playgrounds, and the exterior of buildings may significantly exceed interior noise, so long as there is adequate noise mitigation and quiet indoor space available.

The noise element must include implementation measures and possible solutions to existing and foreseeable noise issues. Furthermore, the policies and standards must be sufficient to serve as a guideline for compliance with sound transmission control requirements ([Gov Code§65302 \(f\)\(4\)](#)).

The noise element should be used to guide decisions concerning land use and the location of new roads and transit facilities since these are common sources of excessive noise levels. Proposed land uses should be analyzed to ensure they are compatible with existing users in the surrounding area, especially where there are residential developments and other sensitive receptors, such as schools, hospitals, and places of worship. Additionally, construction noise, especially in urban areas, can be mitigated with local policies based on community values, such as limiting construction hours or days.

There are many noise related planning resources available. The Caltrans Office of Transportation Laboratory publishes the [Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol](#) for and numerous reports on mitigating transportation noise. The [California Airport Land Use Planning Handbook](#), published by Caltrans' Division of Aeronautics, includes noise information relating to airports. The Federal Highway Administration has published multiple noise reports, including a [Construction Noise Handbook](#), [Highway Traffic Noise: Analysis and Abatement Guide](#), [Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment](#), and [Synthesis of Noise Effects on Wildlife Populations](#).

Statutory Requirements

Local governments must identify noise problems in the community, and analyze and quantify, to the extent practicable, current and projected noise levels, for specific land uses ([Gov. Code section 65302\(f\)\(1\)](#)).

These land uses include highways and freeways, major local streets, passenger and freight railroads and ground rapid transit systems, planes and airports, industrial plants, and other ground stationary noise sources, including but not limited to military installations. ([Gov. Code section 65302\(f\)\(1\)\(A-F\)](#)).

The general plan's noise element must show contours for these noise sources, to the extent practicable, in either Community Noise Equivalent Levels ([CNEL](#)) or day-night average level ([Ldn](#)). These noise contours must be prepared using noise monitoring or accepted noise-modeling techniques. The noise contours must be used as a guide to establish a pattern of land uses in the land use element that minimizes the exposure of community residents to excessive noise ([Gov. Code 65302 \(f\)\(2\), \(3\)](#)).

Local airports are subject to the noise requirements of the Federal Aviation Administration and noise standards under [Title 21, §5000, et seq.](#), of the California Code of Regulations. These standards are designed to encourage the airport proprietor, aircraft operators, local governments, pilots, and Caltrans to work cooperatively to diminish excessive noise. The Federal Aviation Act, however, preempts local regulations controlling noise at airports themselves and limits arrival and departure times of jet aircraft flights. ([See *City of Burbank v. Lockheed Air Terminal* \(1973\) 93 S.Ct 1854](#) and 53 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen 75 (1970)).

Proposed school sites within two nautical miles of an airport runway or potential runway in an airport master plan are subject to stricter noise levels pursuant to review by CalTrans Division of Aeronautics ([CCR Title 21 section 3570](#), and [Education Code 17215](#)) which state that CalTrans shall object to the acquisition of a school site within a 65 decibel annual CNEL aircraft noise contour.

Resources

Infill Development

- ChangeLab [Building in Healthy Infill](#)

Traffic Noise

- Caltrans [Quieter Pavement Research Plan](#)
- Caltrans [Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol](#)
- Federal Highway Administration [Highway Traffic Noise: Analysis and Abatement Guide](#)
- Caltrans [Noise and Vibration Studies](#)
- Caltrans [Technical Noise Supplement](#)
- Federal Highway Administration's [Traffic Noise Model](#)
- Federal Highway Administration, Highway Traffic Noise, [Construction Noise Handbook](#)
- Federal Highway Administration, [Synthesis of Noise Effects on Wildlife Populations](#)
-

Airport Noise

- Caltrans [Airport Land Use Planning Handbook](#)
- Federal Aviation Administration, Policy, International Affairs and Environment [Noise and Emissions](#)
-

Public Health

- World Health Organization [Burden of Disease from Environmental Noise](#)
- World Health Organization [Guidelines for Community Noise](#)

Groundborne Vibration Noise

- Federal Transit Authority (FTA) [Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment](#)

Construction Noise

Caltrans [Transportation and Construction Vibration Guidance Manual](#)

Noise Measurement and Modeling

The local planning agency should select the method of measurement or modeling that best suits its needs, either CNEL or Ldn. See [Appendix D](#) for more information about these two types of noise measurements and noise descriptors.

Noise should be measured at multiple receptors. The volume of traffic noise, construction noise, and the noise of an environment (such as loud schools, playgrounds, or agricultural areas) and how we perceive it depends on many factors, including the location of dwellings and the location and types of trips we make in our neighborhoods on our way to school, work, or shopping.¹⁶ Measuring noise at multiple receptors throughout a community will ensure that the noise element is accurate. The noise element should address the following:

- Major noise sources, both mobile and stationary
- Ground borne vibration noise from public transit, freight trains, or light rail transit lines
- Existing and projected levels of noise and noise contours for major noise sources
- Existing and projected land uses in relation to existing and projected noise sources
- Existing and proposed sensitive receptors, including:
 - Residential land uses
 - Hospitals
 - Convalescent homes
 - Schools
 - Churches
 - Sensitive wildlife habitat, including the habitat of rare, threatened, or endangered species
- Time-of-day, day-of-week, or seasonable variability of noise sources
- Locations where noise-generating activities are desired

¹⁶ Botteldooren, D., Dekoninck, L., Gillis, D., *The Influence of Traffic Noise on Appreciation of the Living Quality of a Neighborhood*, Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health (2011).

The process to create the noise element should include, but is not limited to, the following steps:

- Survey the community to determine the types of preferred and unwanted noise, and the location and extent of noise incompatibility in the community
- Explore methods of noise attenuation to minimize exposure to excessive noise
- Research methods to protect residences and other sensitive receptors from excessive noise
- Draft implementation measures and possible solutions that address existing and foreseeable noise problems

Noise Contours and Exposure

To analyze and quantify the local noise environment, noise level contours, expressed in CNEL or Ldn, should be mapped for the area surrounding each of the identified noise sources. Projections of future noise sources, noise levels, and anticipated impacts, including health impacts, upon existing and proposed land uses should provide information useful for guiding decisions about land use, locations of noise generating sources, and noise reduction mitigation measures. The noise element should also identify areas of conflict between noise sources and sensitive uses to minimize exposure to excessive noise. Noise contours, from all applicable sources, must be mapped and used to inform land use decisions. Mapping noise contours creates an opportunity to engage the community in a practical discussion about noise, and the tradeoffs between noise and other local priorities.

Not all noise can be minimized, and there may even be areas where noise is desired. Some noise sources are inherent to a region, such as noise generated from farming activities in agriculture intensive areas, or wildlife noise from nearby habitat. While urban [infill](#) developments can be noisy environments, they are often [healthy communities](#). Residents whom opt to live in infill developments may welcome such noise, and there are many ways to minimize harmful exposure to excessive noise. Local planning areas are encouraged to embrace the noise characteristics inherent to their region and “design with noise in mind” to minimize harmful exposure to excessive noise.

Mitigation Measures

To minimize exposure to excessive noise, the noise element should identify the best means of noise mitigation for a community. Mitigation measures include soundproofing with soundproof windows and insulation, landscaping and berms, building design and setbacks, buffer areas, operating hours of major sources, roadway maintenance and traffic flow, quieter pavement strategies, and other techniques.

Noise mitigation measures are not one-size-fits-all solutions: some noise mitigation measures are better suited for some communities than others. For example, while sound walls may be a fitting mitigation measure for a rural area, they may not be the best mitigation solution for urban infill areas, as sound walls can impair community connectivity. Consider increased building setback zones or buffer zones: while these may be appropriate mitigation measures where land is not a constraint, it is unlikely that such measures would be feasible in more urban areas where land is limited. The noise element should be flexible and consider the different needs of various communities in a local planning area to determine the best measures to minimize exposure to excessive noise.

Caltrans administers several freeway noise control programs. In general, these are applied to residential and school uses that existed before the particular freeway was constructed. For instance, noise attenuating walls are installed along the freeway frontages of qualified residential development under the New Construction or Reconstruction and Community Noise Abatement programs. In addition, there are a number of schools adjacent to freeways that have qualified for School Noise Abatement Program funds for the acoustical attenuation of classrooms. Some critics of sound walls feel that they can isolate communities. Whenever practicable, noise mitigation should be as unobtrusive as possible.

Implementation measures

Minimization of excessive noise will depend on the success and effectiveness of a local planning area's implementation measures. A critical implementation measure is a noise control ordinance. Noise control ordinances are generally used to resolve short-term noise problems, but they can also be helpful when evaluating the creation of a potential nuisance, or expansion of a major source near sensitive sources. Local planning areas should also regularly update their noise maps so that planning efforts are consistent.

Other Considerations

Noise and Health

Exposure to excessive noise can have health impacts. The most common health impact from excessive noise exposure is sleep disturbance.¹⁷ Sleep disturbance can impair cognitive performance, and alter hormone levels, heart rate, sleep patterns, and mood. Other potential health impacts from exposure to excessive noise include increased levels of hypertension, high blood pressure, and cardiovascular disease.¹⁸

Fortunately, there are multiple options to minimize excessive noise exposure and reduce potential health impacts. Minimization measures include options such as soundproofing a residence to reduce outdoor-to-indoor noise, requiring new residences to place bedrooms in the quietest part of the floor plan, and reducing traffic noise will all minimize exposure to excessive noise and reduce potential health risks.

Noise and Infill Development Considerations

Ground borne Vibration Noise

Ground borne vibration is manmade noise caused by vibrations of the ground due to explosions, construction, or railway and transit movement. Especially for local planning areas where sensitive use areas are, or will be, located near transit centers or railway lines, ground borne vibration should be included in the noise element. Ground borne vibration is already included in the noise section of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Environmental Review Checklist. [California Code of Regulations, Title 14, § 15000 et seq.](#)

¹⁷ King, G., et al, *Noise Levels Associated with Urban Land Use*, Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine, Vol. 89, No. 6, p. 1017, 1028.

¹⁸ *Id* at 1018.

[Appendix G, subd. XII \(c\)](#)). Addressing ground borne vibration in the noise element of a General Plan will ensure greater consistency between a General Plan and CEQA.

Infill development helps reduce [Greenhouse Gas Emissions](#) and is encouraged as part of the [State's Planning Priorities](#). Rail and public transit are key tools for infill development. To the extent ground borne vibration is an issue, it should be mitigated and planned for, with the high value of rail and public transit in mind.

While cars and buses do cause ground borne vibration, it is usually caused by rough or uneven roadways. The repair of any bumps, cracks, potholes on the roadway surface will dramatically reduce or solve ground borne vibration from vehicles.

Ground borne vibration noise from rail systems typically stems from degraded wheel and rail surfaces. Routine maintenance of wheel and rail surfaces is critical to control ground borne vibration. When vibration persists despite routine wheel and rail maintenance, other solutions to control vibration from rail systems include:

- Special track support systems such as floating slabs, resiliency supported ties, high reliance fasteners and ballast mats
- Trenches along the railway to act as a vibration barrier
- Reduction in vehicle speed near sensitive use sites
- Building modifications for nearby buildings with vibration-sensitive equipment affected by rail vibration
- Expansion of the rail right-of-way or purchase of a vibration easement

See the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) [Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment](#) for further guidelines on ground borne vibration and various mitigation strategies.

Ground borne vibration is especially relevant for areas expected to benefit from California's High Speed Rail. The project will stretch from Sacramento to San Diego, with up to twenty-four stations. The project will also invest in local and regional rail lines. Areas expected to benefit from the project should consider effects of ground borne vibration in their noise element. See the project's Environmental Impact Report/Statement [Noise and Vibration Mitigation Guidelines Technical Appendix](#) for more information.

Completeness Checklist

Statutory Citation	Brief Description of Requirement	Location of Required Content, if Relevant	Explanatory Notes
Government Code 65302(f)(1)	<i>(1) The noise element shall recognize the guidelines established by the Office of Noise Control and shall analyze and quantify, to the extent practicable, as determined by the legislative body, current and projected noise levels for all of the following sources:</i> <i>(A) Highways and freeways.</i>		
Gov. Code 65302 (f)(1)(B)	<i>(B) Primary arterials and major local streets.</i>		
Gov. Code 65302 (f)(1)(C)	<i>(C) Passenger and freight online railroad operations and ground rapid transit systems.</i>		
Gov. Code 65302 (f)(1)(D)	<i>(D) Commercial, general aviation, heliport, helistop, and military airport operations, aircraft overflights, jet engine test stands, and all other ground facilities and maintenance functions related to airport operation.</i>		
Gov. Code 65302(f)(1)(E)	<i>(E) Local industrial plants, including, but not limited to, railroad classification yards</i>		
Gov. Code 65302 (f)(1)(F)	<i>(F) Other ground stationary noise sources, including, but not limited to, military</i>		

	<i>installations, identified by local agencies as contributing to the community noise environment.</i>		
Gov. Code 65302(f)(2)	<i>(2) Noise contours shall be shown for all of these sources and stated in terms of community noise equivalent level (CNEL) or day-night average level (Ldn). The noise contours shall be prepared on the basis of noise monitoring or following generally accepted noise modeling techniques for the various sources identified in paragraphs (1) to (6), inclusive.</i>		
Gov. Code 65302(f)(3)	<i>(3) The noise contours shall be used as a guide for establishing a pattern of land uses in the land use element that minimizes the exposure of community residents to excessive noise.</i>		
Government Code 65302(f)(4)	<i>(4) The noise element shall include implementation measures and possible solutions that address existing and foreseeable noise problems, if any. The adopted noise element shall serve as a guideline for compliance with the state's noise insulation standards.</i>		

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>

OPR Recommended Policies

These policies are an example of recommended policies adopted by varying jurisdictions, to be modified and used as appropriate. A full list of recommended policies can be found [here](#)

<i>Sample Policy</i>	<i>Example of Application</i>	<i>Relationship to Other Elements</i>
(city/county) shall avoid placing noise sensitive land uses (e.g. residential, hospitals, assisted living facilities, group homes, schools, day care centers, etc.) within the high noise impact areas (over 65 dB CNEL) for (designated airports) in accordance with the (city/county) Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan	CITY OF RIVERSIDE	LAND USE, CIRCULATION, HOUSING, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL EQUITY
(city/county) shall orient buildings such that the noise sensitive portions of a project are shielded from noise sources.	COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO	LAND USE, CIRCULATION, HOUSING, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL EQUITY,
(city/county) shall require new development to include noise mitigation to assure acceptable interior noise levels appropriate to the land use type: 45 dBA Ldn for residential, transient lodgings, hospitals, nursing homes and other uses where people normally sleep; and 45 dBA L eq (peak hour) for office buildings and similar uses.	CITY OF SACRAMENTO	LAND USE, CIRCULATION, HOUSING, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL EQUITY

Safety Element

Introduction

The aim of the safety element is to reduce the potential risk of death, injuries, property damage, and economic and social dislocation resulting from fires, floods, droughts, earthquakes, landslides, as well as other hazards and climate change impacts. Other locally relevant safety issues, such as airport land use, emergency response, hazardous materials spills, and crime reduction, may also be included. Some local jurisdictions have chosen to incorporate their hazardous waste management plans into their safety elements.

Government Code 65302(g):

(g) (1) A safety element for the protection of the community from any unreasonable risks associated with the effects of seismically induced surface rupture, ground shaking, ground failure, tsunami seiche, and dam failure; slope instability leading to mudslides and landslides; subsidence; liquefaction; and other seismic hazards identified pursuant to Chapter 7.8 (commencing with Section 2690) of Division 2 of the Public Resources Code, and other geologic hazards known to the legislative body; flooding; and wildland and urban fires. The safety element shall include mapping of known seismic and other geologic hazards. It shall also address evacuation routes, military installations, peakload water supply requirements, and minimum road widths and clearances around structures, as those items relate to identified fire and geologic hazards.

The safety element overlaps topics also mandated in the land use, conservation, and open-space elements, as development plans must adequately account for public safety considerations and open space for public health and ecological benefits often incorporate areas of increased hazard risk. When preparing a new general plan or undertaking a comprehensive revision of an existing general plan, OPR suggests addressing these common topics in a single place rather than spreading them among four separate elements. The key concern should be to integrate effectively these common issues into the decision-making process.

The safety element must identify hazards and hazard abatement provisions to guide local decisions related to zoning, subdivisions, and entitlement permits. The element should contain general hazard and risk reduction strategies complementary with those of the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. Ideally, the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan would be incorporated into the safety element as outlined below. Policies should identify hazards and emergency

response priorities, as well as mitigation through avoidance of hazards by new projects and reduction of risk in developed areas. As California confronts mounting [climate change](#) impacts, effective planning measures should include comprehensive hazard mitigation and emergency response strategies that account for heightened frequency and magnitude of wildfires, floods, droughts, extreme heat, and coastal storm damage. Communities may use the safety element as a vehicle for defining “acceptable risk” and the basis for determining the level of necessary mitigation. Policies may include methods of minimizing risks, as well as ways to minimize economic disruption and expedite recovery following disasters.

[Climate change](#) will affect and potentially exacerbate the impact of other hazards rather

[Climate Change](#)

An increasingly important factor affecting disaster management functions is climate change. Climate Change reflects new uncertainties and factors shaping and conditioning hazard mitigation planning. Chapter 4.5 in the 2013 [California State Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) (SHMP) addresses a specific approach for local communities to evaluate their risk as a result of climate change. The Safety Element of the general plan plays an important role in ensuring consistency with the [Local Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) (LHMP) and the SHMP. The general plan and LHMP both provide a local vehicle for implementation of the SHMP, including the provisions dealing with climate change. The SHMP outlines tools, resources and a process for addressing climate change at the local level. The resources the SHMP and LHMP guidance materials reference are the same materials referenced in Chapter 8 of the General Plan Guidelines, Climate Change. (add link back) This provides for consistency across multiple documents such as an adaptation plan, climate action plan, general plan, implementation plan, local hazard mitigation plan, etc.. For more information refer to the website for the [State Hazard Mitigation Plan](#).

than being solely a distinct hazard with unique impacts. For example, extreme heat and heat waves are existing hazards that will be exacerbated by climate change. Impacts of climate change on the frequency, timing, and magnitude of flooding vary with the geography throughout the state. Areas that experience early run off from snow melt coupled with intensified rain or coastal areas experiencing sea level rise may be more greatly impacted by flooding. Hazards that have the potential to be affected by climate change are grouped in this subsection.

[AB2140](#)

Under the federal [Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 \(DMA2K\)](#), each municipality must develop a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) or participate in a multi-jurisdictional LHMP in order to be eligible for pre-disaster mitigation grants or post-disaster recovery assistance from the federal government.

At the state level, [AB 2140](#) (2006) authorizes, local governments to integrate their LHMPs into the safety elements of their general plans. Integration is encouraged through a post-disaster financial incentive which authorizes the state to use available California Disaster Assistance Act funds to cover local shares of the 25% non-federal portion of grant-funded post-disaster projects.

[AB 2140](#) is one of the most important links between general plans and hazard mitigation in California. Integration of the LHMP into the safety element provides an excellent vehicle for implementation of the LHMP. This integration allows hazard mitigation strategies to be implemented and local hazard awareness to be upgraded and enhanced. In addition, all other elements of the general plan, as well as implementation programs (such as zoning, subdivision maps, specific plans, and capital improvement programs), would be required to comply with an LHMP that it is adopted with the safety element.

See [AB 2140](#) (2006) for language regarding the safety element’s relationship to Local Hazard Mitigation Plans.

Correlations among Elements

	Land Use	Circulation	Housing	Conservation	Open Space	Noise
Safety	●	■	●	■	■	

● Identified in statute ■ Closely related to statutory requirements

Required Contents

The safety element must, consistent with Government Code Section 65302(g), provide the protection of the community from any unreasonable risks associated with the effects of:

- Seismically induced surface rupture, ground shaking, ground failure
- tsunami, seiche, and dam failure
- slope instability leading to mudslides and landslides
- subsidence
- liquefaction

- other seismic hazards identified pursuant to Chapter 7.8 (commencing with Section 2690) of Division 2 of the Public Resources Code, and other geologic hazards known to the legislative body
- flooding
- wildland and urban fires

The safety element must include mapping of known seismic and other geologic hazards. It must also address evacuation routes, military installations, peakload water supply requirements, and minimum road widths and clearances around structures, as those items relate to identified fire and geologic hazards.

The safety element must also identify information regarding flood hazards, establish a set of comprehensive goals, policies, and objectives for the protection of the community from the unreasonable risks of flooding, and establish a set of feasible implementation measures designed to carry out the goals, policies, and objectives for flood protection. While not required, it is recommended that the safety element do the same for drought impacts.

The safety element must also be reviewed and updated as necessary to address the risk of fire for land classified as state responsibility areas and land classified as very high fire hazard severity zones. Because [climate change](#) will likely increase California's frequency and intensity of fire weather conditions, even historically less vulnerable regions should reevaluate wildfire risk and prevention strategies in their general plan's safety element. *See the sidebar for more information on fire hazard requirements.*

Consultation Requirements

Prior to the periodic review of its general plan and prior to preparing or revising its safety element, each city and county shall consult the [California Geological Survey of the Department of Conservation](#), the [Central Valley Flood Protection Board](#), if the city or county is located within the boundaries of the [Sacramento and San Joaquin Drainage District](#), as set forth in Section 8501 of the Water Code, and the [Office of Emergency Services](#) for the purpose of including information known by and available to the department, the agency, and the board required by this subdivision. In particular, the Office of Emergency Services

can assist local governments with developing their safety element and aligning general plan strategies with those of the local hazard mitigation plan to ensure consistency.

Statutory Requirements

This section offers a general guide to the contents of the safety element. Note that while the focus is on the minimum requirements for an adequate safety element, an effective general plan will focus more extensively on those issues of greatest relevance to the community. The effects of climate change in particular will influence emergency management issues through varying impacts across local communities statewide. Increases in average temperature, a greater incidence of extreme weather conditions, and sea level rise all will not only exacerbate existing hazards mentioned in this section, but also create new hazards where none previously existed.

Useful Definitions

Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone: A regulatory zone, delineated by the State Geologist, within which site-specific geologic studies are required to identify and avoid fault rupture hazards prior to subdivision of land and/or construction of most structures for human occupancy.

Climate Adaptation: Adjustment or preparation of natural or human systems to a new or changing environment which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities.

Climate Mitigation: A human intervention to reduce the human impact on the climate system; it includes strategies to reduce greenhouse gas sources and emissions and enhancing greenhouse gas sinks.

Critical Facility: Facilities that either (1) provide emergency services or (2) house or serve many people who would be injured or killed in case of disaster damage to the facility. Examples include hospitals, fire stations, police and emergency services facilities, utility facilities, and communications facilities.

Extreme Weather Event: In most cases, extreme weather events are defined as lying in the outermost ("most unusual") ten percent of a place's history. Analyses are available at the national and regional levels.

Fault: A fracture or zone of closely associated fractures along which rocks on one side have been displaced with respect to those on the other side. A fault zone is a zone of related faults which commonly are braided, but which may be branching. A fault trace is the line formed by the intersection of a fault and the earth's surface.

Active Fault: A fault which has exhibited surface displacement within Holocene time (approximately the past 11,000 years).

sheeting on roofs or floors incapable of withstanding lateral loads

large openings in walls that may cause damage from torsional forces

lack of an effective system to resist lateral forces

non-ductile concrete frame construction

Hazardous Material: An injurious substance, including pesticides, herbicides, toxic metals and chemicals, liquefied natural gas, explosives, volatile chemicals, and nuclear fuels.

Hazard Mitigation: Sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and their property from hazards and their effects.

Landslide: A general term for a falling, sliding, or flowing mass of soil, rocks, water, and debris. Includes mudslides, debris flows, and debris torrents.

Liquefaction: A process by which water-saturated granular soils transform from a solid to a liquid state during strong ground shaking.

Maladaptation: Any changes in natural or human systems that inadvertently increase vulnerability to climatic stimuli; an adaptation that does not succeed in reducing vulnerability but increases it instead.

Peakload Water Supply: The supply of water available to meet both domestic water and firefighting needs during the particular season and time of day when domestic water demand on a water system is at its peak.

Resilience: The ability of a social or ecological system to absorb disturbances while retaining the same basic structure and ways of functioning, the capacity for self-organization, and the capacity to adapt to stress and change.

Seiche: An earthquake-induced wave in a lake, reservoir, or harbor.

Potentially Active Fault: A fault which shows evidence of surface displacement during Quaternary time (the last 2 million years).

Flooding: A rise in the level of a water body or the rapid accumulation of runoff, including related mudslides and land subsidence, that results in the temporary inundation of land that is usually dry. Riverine flooding, coastal flooding , mud flows, lake flooding, alluvial fan flooding , flash flooding, levee failures, tsunamis, and fluvial stream flooding are among the many forms that flooding takes.

Ground Failure: Mudslide, landslide, liquefaction or soil compaction.

Hazardous Building: A building that may be hazardous to life in the event of an earthquake because of partial or complete collapse. Hazardous buildings may include:

1. Those constructed prior to the adoption and enforcement of local codes requiring earthquake resistant building design.
2. Those constructed of unreinforced masonry.
3. Those which exhibit any of the following characteristics:

exterior parapets or ornamentation which may fall on passersby

exterior walls that are not anchored to the floors, roof or foundation

Seismic Hazard Zone: A regulatory zone, delineated by the State Geologist, within which site-specific geologic, soils, and foundation engineering studies are required to identify and avoid earthquake-caused ground-failure hazards, or selected other earthquake hazards, prior to subdivision of land and for construction of most structures for human occupancy.

Storm surge: An abnormal rise of water generated by a storm, over and above the predicted astronomical tides.

Subsidence: The gradual, local settling or sinking of the earth's surface with little or no horizontal motion (subsidence is usually the result of gas, oil, or water extraction, hydrocompaction, or peat oxidation, and not the result of a landslide or slope failure).

Seismically Induced Surface Rupture: A break in the ground's surface and associated deformation resulting from the movement of a fault.

Tsunami: A wave, commonly called a tidal wave, caused by an underwater seismic disturbance, such as sudden faulting, landslide, or volcanic activity.

Wildland Fire: A fire occurring in a suburban or rural area which contains uncultivated lands, timber, range, watershed, brush or grasslands. This includes areas where there is a mingling of developed and undeveloped lands.

Seismic Hazards

Requirement Description:

The safety element must establish policies to minimize the loss of property and life as a result of earthquake. The general geology and seismic history of the region and the

planning area could be addressed with a map known seismic and geologic hazards. The element should determine the location of active fault zones designated by the State Geologist under the [Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act](#). Next, a geologic evaluation could evaluate the potential for displacement along active and potentially active faults in the planning area. Active and potentially active faults in the region should be identified with historical data on seismic ground shaking within the planning area. A geotechnical evaluation based on the [state probabilistic earthquake hazard map](#) could determine the potential for localized ground shaking, landslides, and tsunamis. Hazardous or substandard structures that may be subject to collapse in the event of an earthquake, including, but not limited to, unreinforced masonry buildings could be identified.

The geotechnical evaluation could also identify the potential for earthquake-triggered landslide, mudslide, liquefaction, and soil compaction. It should also determine the location of zones of required investigation for liquefaction and earthquake-induced hazards on a seismic hazard zone map prepared by the State Geologist. Areas that would be inundated in the event of a dam failure should also be identified. [Dam inundation maps](#) are available from the [Office of Emergency Services](#). The development, facilities, and people potentially at risk in areas subject to potential inundation should be identified as well.

The safety element should include historical data on landslides and mudslides and identify areas that are landslide-prone by using, among other sources, [landslide features maps](#), [seismic hazard zone maps](#), and [geology](#) for planning maps produced by Department of Conservation. The local potential for landslides and mudslides could also be identified in a geotechnical evaluation.

Historical data on land subsidence resulting from extraction of groundwater, natural gas, oil, and geothermal resources and from hydrocompaction can be used to identify areas of known risk from liquefaction, subsidence, or ground shaking. The potential risks associated with other known geologic hazards, such as volcanic activity, avalanche, or cliff erosion may also be analyzed.

Most of the information listed, needed to complete the analysis for the Safety Element, can be obtained by a combination of five sources: the [State Hazard Mitigation Plan](#), [MyPlan](#) tool, the [General Plan Guidelines Mapping Tool](#), [Cal-Adapt](#) and the [Adaptation Planning Guide](#).

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	Intent of analysis	Recommended Data

Flood Protection

Requirement Description:

Flooding is a natural function of every river, alluvial fan, and coastal area. In riverine systems, floodwaters enrich bottomlands and provide spawning habitats for native fish. There are ecological benefits to maintaining connections between the river and its floodplain.

Land use decisions directly influence the function of floodplains and may either reduce or increase potential flood hazards. The functions of floodplains include, but are not limited to, water supply, water quality, flood and erosion control, and fish and wildlife habitat. Development within floodplains may not only expose people and property to floods, but also increase the potential for flooding elsewhere and negatively impact floodplain ecosystems. [Land use](#) regulations, such as zoning and subdivision ordinances, are the primary

Key Terms

Flood management is defined as the overarching term that encompasses both floodwater management and floodplain management.

Floodwater Management

Floodwater management includes actions to modify the natural flow of floodwaters to reduce losses to human resources and/or to protect benefits to natural resources associated with flooding. Examples of floodwater management actions include containing flows in reservoirs, dams, and natural basins; conveying flows via levees, channels, and natural corridors; managing flows through reservoir reoperation; and managing watersheds by decreasing rainfall runoff and providing headwater stream protection.

Floodplain Management

Floodplain management includes actions to the floodplain to reduce losses to human resources within the floodplain and/or to protect benefits to natural resources associated with flooding. Examples of floodplain management actions include minimizing impacts of flows (e.g., flood-proofing, insurance); maintaining or restoring natural floodplain processes (e.g., riparian restoration, meander corridors, etc.); removing obstacles within the floodplain voluntarily or with just compensation (e.g, relocating at-risk structures); keeping obstacles out of the floodplain (through subdivision and zoning decisions); education and emergency preparedness planning (e.g, emergency response plans, data collection, outreach, insurance requirements, etc.); and ensuring that operations of floodwater management systems are not compromised by activities in the floodplain.

means of implementing general plan policies established to minimize flood hazards. In addition to including floodplain management policies in the general plan, making related changes to zoning and subdivision ordinances is crucial to the success of a floodplain management program.

In the process of preparing a flood management element, the city or county will have to collect a substantial amount of information concerning its floodplains and its watershed. There are a variety of sources for this information. Federal Emergency Management Agency ([FEMA](#)) maps are available for most communities. The [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#) will do floodplain delineation on a cost-sharing basis and has information on floodplains and project levees. [The Department of Water Resources \(DWR\)](#) also has floodplain information and a [floodplain management program](#), as does the [Central Valley Flood Protection Board](#). The [California Office of Emergency Services \(OES\)](#) and DWR have information on past flooding and flood levels based on awareness mapping. Local levee districts and resource conservation districts may also have information to share.

See the box below for a list of legislation passed since 2003, updating safety element requirements specific to flood hazard mitigation plans. Of special note, the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan (described under [SB 5](#)) aims to revamp insufficient levee, bypass, and other flood defense mechanisms to create a more integrated and hazard-averse flood management system. Carrying implications for Central Valley land use, conservation, and safety planning in floodplain zones, the 2012 [Central Valley Flood Protection Plan](#) (CVFPP) documents the condition of all of the region's state and federal flood management facilities and guides improvements to flood hazard prevention along the Sacramento River and San Joaquin Rivers. OPR will provide links to basin-wide state feasibility studies, locally-initiated regional flood management project plans, and a Central Valley conservation strategy as they become available. However, updates to the safety element should remain consistent with land use development policies and conservation areas and practices described in other general plan elements.

For legislation related to the Safety Element please refer to the [State Hazard Mitigation Plan](#)

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>

Fire Hazards

Requirement Description:

There are many opportunities to address fire protection, fire prevention and hazard mitigation in the General Plan, most obviously in the safety element which deals with all manner of natural and man-made hazards to life and property. California’s increasing population and expansion of development into previously undeveloped areas is creating more "[wildland-urban interface](#)" with a corresponding risk of economic loss caused by wildland fire. The changing climate, specifically the rising temperatures and increasing

Government Code 65302(g):

(3) Upon the next revision of the housing element on or after January 1, 2014, the safety element shall be reviewed and updated as necessary to address the risk of fire for land classified as state responsibility areas, as defined in Section 4102 of the Public Resources Code, and land classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, as defined in Section 51177. This review shall consider the advice included in the Office of Planning and Research’s most recent publication of “Fire Hazard Planning, General Technical Advice Series” and shall also include all of the following:

(A) Information regarding fire hazards, including, but not limited to, all of the following:

(i) Fire hazard severity zone maps available from the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

(ii) Any historical data on wildfires available from local agencies or a reference to where the data can be found.

(iii) Information about wildfire hazard areas that may be available from the United States Geological Survey.

(iv) General location and distribution of existing and planned uses of land in very high fire hazard severity zones and in state responsibility areas, including structures, roads, utilities, and essential public facilities. The location and distribution of planned uses of land shall not require defensible space compliance measures required by state law or local ordinance to occur on publicly owned lands or open space designations of homeowner associations.

(v) Local, state, and federal agencies with responsibility for fire protection, including special districts and local offices of emergency services.

(B) A set of goals, policies, and objectives based on the information identified pursuant to subparagraph (A) for the protection of the community from the unreasonable risk of wildfire.

(C) A set of feasible implementation measures designed to carry out the goals, policies, and objectives based on the information identified pursuant to subparagraph (B) including, but not limited to, all of the following:

(i) Avoiding or minimizing the wildfire hazards associated with new uses of land.

(ii) Locating, when feasible, new essential public facilities outside of high fire risk areas, including, but not limited to, hospitals and health care facilities, emergency shelters, emergency command centers, and emergency communications facilities, or identifying construction methods or other methods to minimize damage if these facilities are located in a state responsibility area or very high fire hazard severity zone.

(iii) Designing adequate infrastructure if a new development is located in a state responsibility area or in a very high fire hazard severity zone, including safe access for emergency response vehicles, visible street signs, and water supplies for structural fire suppression.

(iv) Working cooperatively with public agencies with responsibility for fire protection.

(D) If a city or county has adopted a fire safety plan or document separate from the general plan, an attachment of, or reference to, a city or county’s adopted fire safety plan or document that fulfills commensurate goals and objectives and contains information required pursuant to this paragraph.

temporal variability of water availability, continues to increase wildfire risk in many areas. Meanwhile drought episodes with greater frequency and severity effectively lower fuel moisture conditions to create longer fire seasons, and combined with overstocked vegetation vulnerable to insects and diseases, produce an abundance of dead woody matter prime for intense burning. For a discussion of how local governments can plan for drought conditions and consequent fire hazards, see box below.

Mitigating Hazards through Drought Resiliency Plans

The gradual onset of severe droughts in California poses considerable threats to public safety and wellbeing by increasing fire hazard susceptibility and straining already scarce water resources. Drought's toll on crop yields, livestock production, and local community water sources create food and water security concerns, in addition to economic considerations, that showcase the importance of proper preparedness plans. Millions of dollars in drought-related damages over the last several decades, stemming especially from irrigation shortages, may become more commonplace as climate change results in longer and more severe drought conditions. Climate change will likely foster more consecutive disasters – for example, droughts followed by fires, or floods followed by drought – prolonging recovery of natural resources and compounding total recovery costs

In response, many local governments are choosing to strengthen water management and drought prevention efforts by adding a separate water element to their general plan, but drought preparedness strategies could also be incorporated into the safety element as part of fire or flood hazard mitigation tactics. Structural and nonstructural flood management methods that enhance water storage and groundwater recharge work to mitigate drought impacts, and promoting greater water efficiency through land use and development policies can minimize capital damage from droughts as well as fires. As opposed to solely relying on local hazard mitigation plans, existing urban and agricultural water management plans, or expecting state or federal disaster aid after severe drought impacts, local governments can use the general plan as a tool to encourage water conservation policies, drought-tolerant parks and landscaping, water audits, and dual plumbing with recycled water. For more resources on how local governments can plan for droughts, see:

[California's 2010 State Drought Contingency Plan](#)

[OPR's 2014 Local Government Drought Toolkit](#)

[California's 2009 State Water Plan for integrated water management](#)

[Local Government Commission's guidebook for regional water sustainability](#)

Aside from local fire plans and hazard mitigation plans, the general plan's safety element can provide a framework for inserting fire protection and prevention policy requirements in zoning, subdivision, and strategic fire defense ordinances. To safeguard the increasing "wildland-urban interface, " communities with State Responsibility Area (SRA) or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone Local Responsibility Area (LRA) must update their safety element following the next revision of the housing element on or after January 1, 2014 to address the risk of wildland fire. In order to develop viable plans for fire protection, wildfire risk reduction, evacuation needs, and consistency between general plan elements and other local plans, the safety element shall incorporate information such as fire hazard maps and assessments, implementation goals and actionable policies, as well as any appropriate references to local fire safety plans.

As a guiding resource, OPR's [Fire Hazard Planning Technical Advisory](#) includes a detailed discussion about how to incorporate and comply with the fire hazard requirements in a general plan.

When addressing fire hazard planning through the safety element, OPR recommends local governments:

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
Social, Economic, or Environmental Related		

Other Considerations

Additional Requirements

The Safety Element must also address additional, interrelated considerations in the context of fire and geological hazards. These include evacuation routes, military installations, peakload water supply requirements, and minimum road widths and clearances around structures. The relationships between these considerations interplays throughout the required contents of the safety element, and should be analyzed in the context of safety and disasters, including drought, fire, flood, or seismic activity, as appropriate.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>

Adaptation and Resilience

[Climate change](#) is exacerbating many of the hazards discussed in the safety element. For a more detailed discussion of issues associated with climate change and how to incorporate them in to your general plan, please refer to the [climate change chapter](#) and the [California State Hazard Mitigation Plan](#).

Completeness Checklist

Statutory Citation	Brief Description of Requirement	Explanatory Notes
Code Section 65302	Identification of unreasonable risks and policies for the protection of the community from such risks.	
	<i>Slope Instability</i>	

	<p>slope instability leading to mudslides and landslides;</p>	
	<p><i>Seismic risks, including:</i></p> <p>seismically induced surface rupture, ground shaking, ground failure, tsunami, seiche, and dam failure; subsidence, liquefaction, and other seismic hazards identified pursuant to Chapter 7.8 (commencing with Section 2690) of Division 2 of the Public Resources Code, and other geologic hazards known to the legislative body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mapping of known seismic and other geologic hazards,• Address<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ evacuation routes○ military installations○ peakload water supply requirements, and○ minimum road widths and clearances around structures	
	<p><i>Flooding</i></p> <p><u>Identify</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flood Hazard Zones• FEMA Flood Insurance Maps• Army Corps of Engineer Flood information• Flood maps from the Central Valley Flood Protection Board• Dam Failure Maps (Office of Emergency Services)• DWR Floodplain Maps• Maps of Levee Protection Zones• Areas subject to inundation in the event of the failure of levees and floodwalls• Historic flood information• Existing and planned development in flood hazard areas• Agencies with responsibility for flood protection <p><u>Mandatory Goals, Policies and Objectives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid and minimize flood risks for new development.• Should new development be located in flood	

	<p>hazard zones? If so, what are appropriate mitigation measures?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain the integrity of essential public facilities.• Locate, when feasible, new essential public facilities outside of flood hazard zones, including hospitals and health care facilities, emergency shelters, fire stations, emergency command centers, and emergency communications facilities, or identifying mitigation measures.• Establishing cooperative working relationships among public agencies with responsibility for flood protection. <p><u>Feasible Mitigation Measures</u>, to implement the policies above.</p>	
	<p><i>Wildland and Urban Fires</i></p> <p>Identification of and policies for the protection of the community from, any unreasonable risks associated with wildland and urban fires.</p> <p><u>State Responsibility Areas and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones</u></p> <p><u>Consider advice</u> in OPR’s Fire Hazard Technical Advisory</p> <p><u>Identify</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CALFire Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps• Historical data on wildfires• USGS wildfire hazard areas• Existing and planned development within these areas• Agencies with responsibility for fire protection in these areas <p><u>Mandatory Goals, Policies and Objectives</u></p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect the community from unreasonable risks• See mitigation measures below. <p><u>Feasible Mitigation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid and minimize fire risks for new development.• Should new development be located in fire hazard zones? If so, what are appropriate mitigation measures?• Maintain the integrity of essential public facilities.• Locate, when feasible, new essential public facilities outside of fire hazard zones, including hospitals and health care facilities, emergency shelters, fire stations, emergency command centers, and emergency communications facilities,• If essential facilities are located in high fire zones, identify mitigation measures, such as safe access for emergency response vehicles, visible street signs, and water supplies for structural fire suppression.• Establishing cooperative working relationships among public agencies with responsibility for fire protection.	
	Review the Safety Element upon each Housing Element update	
	Consult with specified agencies in updating the safety element	

OPR Recommended Policies

These policies are an example of recommended policies adopted by varying jurisdictions, to be modified and used as appropriate. A full list of recommended policies can be found [here](#)

Sample Policy	Example of Application	Relation to other elements
(City/county) shall Promote the strengthening of planned utilities, the retrofit and rehabilitation of	City of Rancho Cucamonga	Circulation, climate change, economic development

existing weak structures and lifeline utilities, and the relocation or strengthening of certain critical facilities to increase public safety and minimize potential damage from seismic and geologic hazards		
(city/county) shall allow for prudent development and redevelopment of all properties located on slopes greater than 10 percent, and continue to preserve as open space properties located on slopes greater than 30 percent.	City of Rancho Cucamonga	Land use, housing, open space, climate change, economic development
Site critical public facilities—including hospital and healthcare facilities, emergency shelters, police and fire stations, and emergency communications facilities—outside of the tsunami evacuation zone and 100-year flood plains	Pacifica	Land use, healthy communities, social equity, climate change
Identify and establish specific travel routes for the transport of hazardous materials and wastes, with key considerations being capacity to safely accommodate additional truck traffic, avoidance of residential areas, and use of interstate or State divided highways as preferred routes	City of Rialto	Circulation, social equity, climate change
Work to achieve consistency between General Plan land use and related policies and the Airport Comprehensive Land Use Plan, as is appropriate for the community. Measures may include restrictions on permitted land uses and development criteria, including height restrictions	Redwood City	Land use, circulation, economic development

Air Quality

Introduction

Chronic exposure to air pollutants is a serious health risk to millions of California residents, particularly the young, the elderly, and people with heart disease and respiratory problems. Safeguarding public health has been the primary focus of federal and state air quality legislation and activities for many years. Air pollution also impacts local economies by damaging agricultural crops, natural vegetation, buildings, and other exposed materials. In addition, the economic health of an area can be affected adversely if insufficient air quality improvement triggers more stringent federally mandated air pollution controls on business. Air pollution also can impair visibility and obscure views. For these reasons, cities and counties should strive to reduce emissions for the benefit of both their own residents and those of other communities in their region and the state as a whole.

Government Code 65302.1(c):

The adoption of air quality amendments to a general plan to comply with the requirements of subdivision (d) shall include all of the following:

(1) A report describing local air quality conditions including air quality monitoring data, emission inventories, lists of significant source categories, attainment status and designations, and applicable state and federal air quality plans and transportation plans.

Local jurisdictions have responsibility for land use planning and can also significantly affect the design, creation, and management of development and the local circulation system. Local governments have an opportunity to address air quality issues through general plans, development ordinances, local circulation systems, transportation services, and other plans and programs. No other level of government has such responsibility, including air districts.

The general plan, as the foundation for local planning and development, can be an important tool for implementing policies and programs beneficial to air quality. Communities may choose to adopt a separate air quality element or to integrate air quality-beneficial objectives, policies, and strategies in other elements of the plan, such as the land use, circulation, conservation, and community design elements. Whichever method is selected, consistency among elements and policies within the plan is essential for successful implementation.

Cities and counties within the [San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District](#) (SJVAPCD) jurisdiction are required by state law to include air quality measures in their general plans. The SJVAPCD has developed the [Air Quality Guidelines for General Plans](#) to assist these cities and counties in meeting these requirements. The document provides additional goals, policies, and programs for adoption in general plans that will reduce vehicle miles traveled and improve air quality. Although air quality measures are only statutorily required in the San Joaquin Valley, the benefits of adopting an air quality element or implementing air quality policies throughout a general plan are universal.

Correlations among Elements

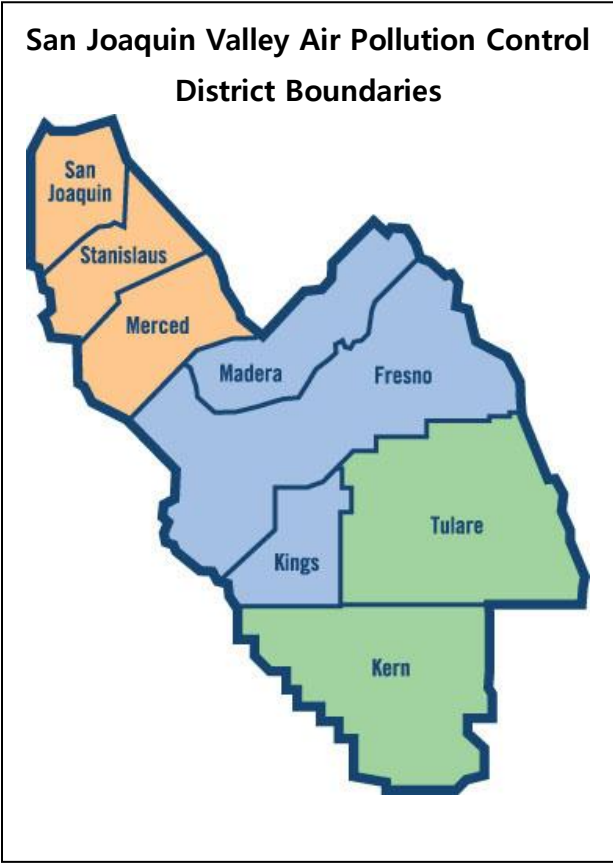
	Land Use	Circulation	Housing	Conservation	Open Space	Safety	Noise
Air Quality	■	■	■	■	●	■	

● Identified in statute ■ Closely related to statutory requirements

Required Contents

The legislative body of each city and county within the jurisdictional boundaries of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) must amend the appropriate elements of its general plan, which may include, but are not limited to, the required elements dealing with land use, circulation, housing, conservation, and open space, to include data and analysis, goals, policies, and objectives, and feasible implementation strategies to improve air quality.

The adoption of air quality amendments to a general plan shall include all of the following:



- A report describing local air quality conditions including:
 - Air quality monitoring data
 - Emission inventories
 - Lists of significant source categories
 - Attainment status and designations
- Applicable state and federal air quality plans and transportation plans
- A summary of local, district, state, and federal policies, programs, and regulations that may improve air quality in the city or county.
- A comprehensive set of goals, policies, and objectives that may improve air quality.
- A set of feasible implementation measures designed to carry out those goals, policies, and objectives.

Federal, State, Regional and Local Air Quality

Federal Air Quality Standards – The Federal Clean Air Act (CAA) requires the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) to set and periodically review national air quality standards (NAAQS) for six air pollutants: carbon monoxide (CO), ozone (O₃), particulate matter (currently in two size ranges: less than 10 microns in diameter, PM₁₀; and less than 2.5 microns in diameter, PM_{2.5}, also called fine particulate), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), sulfur oxides (SO_x), and lead (Pb). Primary standards based only on health consideration, and secondary standards are based only on public welfare considerations. When U.S. EPA revises a NAAQS, states are required to attain the NAAQS by target dates specified in the CAA. A state's NAAQS attainment or non-attainment status is determined by U.S. EPA. States that do not attain the NAAQS are required to develop and implement air pollution control plans to achieve the NAAQS (state implementation plans, SIPs) by the target date. U.S. EPA provides guidance interpreting the SIP requirements in the CAA that the states must follow to develop an approvable SIP. If U.S. EPA deems a SIP is not approvable or if a state fails to develop a SIP, U.S. EPA can develop a Federal Implementation Plan that can be imposed on the state.

State Air Quality Standards – The California Air Resources Board (ARB) was established in 1968 to address air quality problems in California. Since formation of U.S. EPA in 1970, ARB has been designated as the State agency responsible for carrying out the State's responsibilities under the CAA. Because California was already regulating air quality before formation of U.S. EPA and passage of the CAA, California was granted several privileges that are not allowed to any other state, including the unique authority to regulate mobile sources..

The California Clean Air Act (CCAA) also directs ARB to set state ambient air quality standards (CAAQS), as well as directing ARB to identify nonattainment areas of the State. In contrast to NAAQS, CAAQS do not have attainment date targets, however, areas that are nonattainment for the CAAQS must make annual progress to reduce air pollution levels. ARB monitors air quality statewide through an extensive monitoring network that is jointly operated with local air pollution control districts (APCDs) and air quality management districts (AQMDs). ARB also promulgates regulations that reduce air pollution emissions from motor vehicles and consumer products that improve air quality throughout the State. ARB has oversight responsibilities related to local air district activities.

Regional Air Quality Management –California is divided into geographic areas which share common airsheds, called air basins. Each part of California falls under the authority of a county air pollution control district (APCD) or a multi-county air quality management district (AQMD). These local districts have the main responsibility of controlling air pollution emissions from stationary sources within their jurisdictions, including sources such as factories, power plants, gas stations, and dry cleaners. The districts adopt and implement rules and regulations related to the stationary sources under their jurisdiction to reach ambient air quality standards in their air basin, and to enforce relevant State and federal laws.

Local Air Quality –Local government air quality responsibility includes four main areas: land use planning, review and mitigation of the environmental impacts of development projects, development and maintenance of transportation infrastructures; including transit systems, and implementation of local air quality programs.

At least 45 days prior to the adoption of air quality amendments to a general plan pursuant to this section, each city and county shall send a copy of its draft document to the SJVAPCD. The SJVAPCD may review the draft amendments to determine whether they may

improve air quality consistent with the strategies. Within 30 days of receiving the draft amendments, the SJVAPCD shall send any comments and advice to the city or county. The legislative body of the city or county shall consider the district’s comments and advice prior to the final adoption of air quality amendments to the general plan. The SJVAPCD’s comments are advisory to the city or county.

Statutory Requirements

The SJVUAPCD prepared the [Guide for Assessing and Mitigating Air Quality Impacts](#) guidance manual on August 20, 1998. The manual, which has undergone subsequent revisions to insure its applicability over time, was developed to provide guidance for addressing air quality in environmental documents within the District. This includes methods of determining local air quality and suggested policies for improving air quality.

Completeness Checklist

Statutory Citation	Brief Description of Requirement	Explanatory Notes
Air Quality is 65302.1	Background report on local air quality conditions, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">air quality monitoring data,emission inventories,lists of significant source categories,attainment status and designations, andapplicable state and federal air quality plans and transportation plans	
	Summary of government policies, programs, and regulations addressing air quality, including <ul style="list-style-type: none">LocalDistrictStateFederal	

	<p>Goals, Policies and Objectives, consistent with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mitigate project level and cumulative air quality impacts under CEQA• Integrate land use plans, transportation plans, and air quality plans.• Plan land uses in ways that support a multimodal transportation system (i.e., dense and compact).• Local action to support programs that reduce congestion and vehicle trips.• Plan land uses to minimize exposure to toxic air pollutant emissions from industrial and other sources.• Reduce particulate matter emissions from sources under local jurisdiction.• Support district and public utility programs to reduce emissions from energy consumption and area sources.	
	Feasible implementation tools	
	Consider Air District comments on the draft plan	

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

<div>Social, Economic, or Environmental Related</div>	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>

OPR Recommended Policies

These policies are an example of recommended policies adopted by varying jurisdictions, to be modified and used as appropriate. A full list of recommended policies can be found [here](#)

<i>Sample Policy</i>	<i>Example of Application</i>	<i>Relationship to Other Elements</i>

Chapter 5: Healthy Communities

Designing Healthy, Equitable, Resilient, and Economically Vibrant Places

"I thought about it while riding my bicycle."

- Albert Einstein on the Theory of Relativity

Introduction

The health and well-being of California's residents are fundamental to their quality of life and economic vitality. Protection of the public health, safety, and welfare of its residents is the legal basis for land use regulation.¹⁹ Homes, schools, and neighborhoods influence community health in fundamental ways. In these places are opportunities to influence and improve health, by ensuring that everyone has access to the ingredients for a healthy life, including nourishing food, safe water, affordable places to live, safe places to walk, bike, and be active, and clean air indoors and out. Policy priorities established in local general plans have tremendous potential to improve community health and make the healthy option the easier option.

Research shows that while access to health services is important, social, environmental, and economic factors also have a significant impact on health outcomes- the built environment is a key component of those factors. The built environment can affect all chronic conditions. Walkable neighborhoods promote physical activity.^{iv} Other links between health and environment continue to emerge; for example, the impact of green space on mental and physical health.^v Many planning policies, such as Complete Streets, already promote healthier outcomes by creating safer places to walk with improved connectivity to destinations. Adding a health lens to the planning process can lead to better health outcomes. Cross-sectoral work throughout the planning process allows communities to prioritize policies and coordinate with other local government agencies and private or non-

¹⁹ Cecily Talbert Barclay, Matthew S. Gray, Curtins California Land Use and Planning Law (Solano Press 34th Edtn. 2014).

profit partners to improve the health of the community. Many of the health-related policies identified in this section also promote economic, equity, and climate resiliency goals.

This chapter provides concepts integrated from promising practices that communities may voluntarily incorporate into their general plans and focuses on data analysis and policy development to further healthy planning. Fortunately, many opportunities are already aligned with existing planning practice and state legislation, such as requirements for incorporating [complete streets](#), addressing [climate change](#), and considering [environmental justice](#). This chapter provides ideas for data analysis, policy development, and implementation. Information was gathered from multiple sources, including health organizations across the state, a review of existing published research literature, a survey of promising practices, and extensive stakeholder engagement. As with all of the voluntary sections, this chapter provides suggestions and resources for use by jurisdictions as they see fit.

Correlations among Elements

	Land Use	Circulation	Housing	Conservation	Open Space	Noise	Safety
Healthy Communities	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

● Identified in statute ■ Closely related to statutory requirements

Strategies and Approaches

Incorporating Health Considerations in General Plans

Local jurisdictions that have incorporated health considerations into their general plans have opted for one of three formats 1) a separate health element; 2) an integrated approach which has health woven throughout all elements; or 3) a hybrid approach that weaves health throughout the General Plan and uses a health element to frame the importance of health issues. The adoption of a health element is consistent with [Section 65303](#) of the State of California Government Code. There are benefits to having a separate health element

because it can be easier for the public and decision-makers to see health-related policies in one place. At the same time, an integrated approach puts health-related policies into the elements that address those issues; for example, including active transportation policies in a [circulation](#) element could potentially make implementation more actionable, by incorporating them in to larger transportation plans. Some jurisdictions incorporate more specific health considerations into the [housing](#) element. Since this element is often updated more frequently, it provides an opportunity for more regular evaluation of policy implementation and progress. Regardless of approach, the health-related policies must meet internal consistency rules set forth in Government Code Section [65300.5](#). Health policies carry the same legal weight as all other elements once the final general plan is adopted. Ultimately, the best format will depend on the local context, available funding, and community interest, and should complement the overall general plan update and vision.

Jurisdictions will likely prioritize various health considerations differently depending on the local context. For instance, some communities may focus on active transportation, while other communities may emphasize clean water access, food systems or access to health care. Whether the General Plan is being updated at the city or county level could also impact which health issues emerge as priority areas in a general plan update. Additionally, policies that work in a rural area might not be as relevant for an urban area and vice versa. The discussion below is not an exhaustive list, but rather a starting point for further deliberation as to some of the associations between health and planning.

Innovative Partnerships and Collaboration

Planning relies on collaborating with different sectors to accomplish the vision set forth in the General Plan. Addressing health in the built environment creates an opportunity to form new partnerships. Several organizations can provide unique health expertise and offer a health perspective during the planning process. Additional models of collaboration are referenced in the [Public Engagement and Outreach Chapter](#).

Both health and planning have distinct professional terminology. In local jurisdictions that have successfully integrated health considerations, cross-sector groups prioritized learning basic planning and health terms, which is important for professional collaboration as well as

for community outreach. The long-term nature of the land use plans, e.g., 20 years or more, is new to many groups outside of the planning community. Particularly for large jurisdictions, general plan updates can be costly and are not undertaken frequently. Therefore, it is important to provide clear expectations in the initial phases of engagement, to clarify the timeline, and set expectations about the planning process. In addition, it may be beneficial for jurisdictions that decide to incorporate explicit health considerations into their general plan to start with a city or county resolution prior to the formal update of the General Plan to raise awareness about the connections between the built environment and healthy planning to achieve improved health outcomes. The “Healthy Eating, Active Living Resolution” is an example of such a resolution. To date, 176 cities across California have enacted resolutions to support health and wellness policies.^{vi}

Sources of Support and Information for health considerations

- **Local County and City Departments of Public Health:** Public health experts have in-depth understanding of local health data as well as strong ties with community organizations
- **Health related non-profits:** Many organizations are working to improve walkability, bikeability, accessibility for the disabled, and overall health in local communities
- **Equity or EJ related non-profits:** Many organizations are working to improve conditions in communities unable to access basic resources like safe water, healthy foods, and healthful air quality
- **Community groups:** Neighborhood or community organizations, environmental justice organizations, local parent groups, youth groups, faith-based organizations, or topically focused interest groups often work on community health issues
- **Academic institutions:** Academic researchers often analyze health data and provide expertise on data analysis, mapping, health impact analysis, and knowledge of local health conditions
- **Hospitals and/ or Clinics:** Health care reform has increased awareness on the social, environmental, and economic issues that affect health beyond clinic walls; non-profit hospitals conduct community health needs assessments (CHNAs) and provide funding for initiatives to improve health

- **Local and Regional Governments:** Local agencies such as police, water, flood, utility, and air districts manage programs that impact healthy planning processes
- **Local School Districts:** School districts partner with Safe Routes to School programs to ensure safe access to get to school; districts also participate in school siting of new facilities, have access to forecasted school growth and/or school closings
- **Private Sector Partners:** Local business associations, vendors, and local industries are increasingly designing work wellness programs which often have a transit component

Innovating in Riverside - A Healthy Community Planner

In 2011, through a grant by The California Endowment (TCE), the Riverside County Department of Public Health became the first health department in California to hire a full-time urban/regional planner. This "Healthy Communities Planner" position is designed to provide leadership in bringing public health concerns into municipal planning. The planner is key to bridging the gap between public health and urban/regional planners to help ensure that health is considered as the cities and the county plan for the built environment, future development and population growth. The planner is helping to implement the County's Health Element of the General Plan, actively

Health Considerations

The health considerations listed in this section were gathered from multiple sources, including health organizations across the state, a review of existing literature and best and promising practices, and an extensive stakeholder engagement process. It is divided by general health consideration, example policies are listed below to address these topics as well as in the appendix A. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, some local jurisdictions have separate health elements, and others have integrated or hybrid approaches.

Health & Economic Opportunity

Increasingly, health is recognized as a vital component of human capital. Several measures of health and wellbeing are factored into the World Economic Forum Human Capital Report.^{vii} Communities that have access to a wide array of resources have more opportunities to experience healthier outcomes and attain their fullest potential. Land use planning can influence commute patterns, access to jobs, and development projects can serve as job creation opportunities. General plan policies can impact the presence of anchor institutions, such as universities, schools, medical facilities and/or clinics, and have a stabilizing effect on the local economy. Recently, the San Francisco Federal Reserve Bank launched a nation-wide Healthy Communities cross-sector initiative to facilitate discussion between community development partners and the health sector, seeking to improve investment in low-income communities and improve health at the community level.^{viii} New models, with a more integrated approach, continue to emerge and focus on measureable and scalable results. Many of the models for economic development examine the role of Transit-Oriented and Infill Development recognizing that access to transit corridors can leverage resources and increase access to services and amenities to support healthy lifestyles for local community members that work, live, and play in the surrounding areas.

Concurrently, land use patterns that promote healthier lifestyles can generate economic value. A synthesis of peer-reviewed literature showed that open space for recreation and walkable communities create positive economic impacts.^{ix} For Instance, a rising demand for more walkable transit-oriented neighborhoods has increased resale value of property in those neighborhoods.^x Recognizing the power of healthy planning, the Urban Land Institute has a building healthy places initiative and recently published a series of case studies from developments around the world with a host of wellness features including support of bicycling, built amenities to support physical activity, and design to increase social interaction.^{xi}

With changes in health policy, new incentives have emerged for workplace wellness programs,^{xii} including opportunities to site businesses near multi-modal transportation in a manner that encourages walking, increase activity through design, and improve health in conjunction with workplace programs.

A Changing Climate & Resiliency

The natural environment supports human life. Humans, in turn, impact the natural environment. The most prominent example is climate change caused by greenhouse gases (GHGs). Changes to the climate can have devastating consequences on health due to physical or mental harm or displacement from increased frequency or severity of disasters like flooding, drought, fire, and landslides. Climate change may not only increase existing risks but will also pose new threats to human health. The California Department of Public Health provides recommendations and publications dealing with health and climate change through their [climate change and public health team](#). While climate change will be the biggest common pathway that threatens public health for decades to come, land use planning can help reduce GHGs that cause climate change and prepare and adapt. The Safety Element already requires natural hazard areas to be considered to avoid or mitigate for potential hazards such as fires, flood zones, earthquakes, landslides and other hazards. Explicit consideration of health issues provides an opportunity to improve resilience of local communities.

Some health effects of climate change are already being experienced due to increasing temperature. Twelve of the warmest years ever recorded in history have occurred in the last fifteen years.^{xiii} Temperatures in urban areas can exacerbate already warm conditions due to materials- such as asphalt-absorbing heat and then releasing it, causing urban heat islands. Increased exposure to heat puts children, elderly, and people with pre-existing health conditions at more serious risk to suffer from heat stroke and heat-related complications. Studies show increased mortality during times of high heat.^{xiv} In fact, according to the Center for Disease Control, between 1979 and 2003, more people prematurely died from extreme heat-related illness than the total combined deaths from other natural disasters including tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, and lightning.^{xv}

Land use planning to reduce urban heat island effects is important to create more resilient communities to withstand extreme heat. Increased urban greening and cool surfaces, which have a high-albedo effect, reflecting higher portions of radiation and thus absorbing less, can decrease temperatures and lessen the effects of extreme heat. Green roofs can also have health benefits by reducing exposure to heat with the added benefit of better air quality. Healthy tree canopy can also provide shade from heat, help with carbon capture,

and improve air quality.^{xvi} Land use planning can also help to ensure the availability of water resources for cooling purposes.

With climate change, there is a growing recognition of the need to preserve limited resources such as water, fertile ground for agriculture, energy, and clean air. All of these actions are vital for human health.

Land use policies to promote efficient circulation, conservation, and recapture of water are needed for water conservation and drought mitigation. Additionally, it is important to control for pools of stagnant water. As water pools, without natural systems, such as certain fish populations, there is an increased risk for mosquito reproduction. With higher mosquito populations, strong pesticides- that can affect health- are required to spray to contain mosquito populations. Scientists predict that vector borne diseases will change in the future as a result of climate change. More tropical diseases, not previously experienced in California, such as dengue and yellow fever could become more of a concern. In 2013, the particular mosquito that carries Dengue was found in California. Land use policies to conserve water and prevent large scale stagnant pools will be key.

Climate change also has the potential to harm agricultural yields. Ensuring adequate food supplies to feed the population and avoid famines will require preservation of agricultural land. Land use policies that identify and avoid development on prime agricultural land are important to protect California's food supply.

Energy conservation programs have potential health co-benefits. When buildings and developments are planned to use less energy they can reduce energy bills and allow families to use the savings towards other expenses. Additionally, programs have started to monitor the benefits of energy efficiency measures and the opportunity to improve indoor air quality at the same time, which can reduce costs of respiratory illness such as asthma.^{xvii}

Policies that continue to improve air quality such as creating more public transportation options, zero emission vehicles, and bike and walk options for commuting are all important to maintain air quality and promote public health.

Active Living & Recreation

The design of the physical environment can either facilitate active transport or serve as a barrier. Physical inactivity is one of the key contributors to chronic disease in California.^{xviii} Only half of Californians meet the recommended daily activity: about thirty minutes a day for adults and one hour for children. ^{xix} Physical inactivity is associated with obesity. In 2011, 30.4% of California Children age 10-17 were overweight or obese.^{xx} In 2012, 25% of adult Californians were obese. ^{xxi} Obesity increases the risk for many chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease and many cancers. A more active lifestyle can help reduce the risk of obesity. Active living incorporates physical activity into one's daily routine such as walking to perform errands, active transportation to work, walking or biking to school, or accessing nearby open space to pursue recreation.

Active transportation options allow for less time spent in vehicles. In addition, greater individual activity also helps reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) resulting in less greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and improving air quality. Many local jurisdictions have developed active design guidelines that can also complement General Plan Policies.

Planning connected bike and pedestrian paths increase alternatives to auto use. Both transit oriented development (TOD) and infill development also create an opportunity for more active lifestyles. Complete Streets and multimodal, interconnected transit allow access to services, housing, school, open space recreation areas, and other amenities without the need for vehicles. In conjunction with a robust public transportation system, first and last mile policies- addressing the need to provide connections between destinations and the beginning or end of transit- ensure increased mobility. Additional infrastructure such as covered rest areas, shade, age friendly seating, and bike storage are important to increase utilization. This is an area where interagency cooperation with other districts or entities can allow for creative and cost effective solutions such as through easements for trail networks.

The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection act of 2008 (SB 375), promotes regional coordination of transportation and land use planning, including support of active transportation. These policies help reduce the burden of transportation on the environment, improve air quality, and help communities be more active. Prioritizing more forms of active transport policies in general plans will strengthen potential for regional transportation plans to meet GHG reduction targets established pursuant to SB 375 (2008).

Due to recent federal legislation, the statewide funding mechanisms to support active transportation have been evolving. The Active Transportation Program, enacted via Senate Bill 99, is a new program to fund pedestrian, bicycle, and Safe Routes to School programs (SRTS). In 1969, nationally, almost half of the children between the ages of 5-14 walked or biked to school, but that number has plummeted to 13% in 2009. While the reasons for this are many, factors include the distance to school, school siting, safety of the area, and physical conditions on the route to school. Programs that promote walking or biking to school help achieve daily-recommended physical activity. Improving infrastructure and safety also increase the ability of children to walk or bike to school as desired. Although school siting is conducted outside of the realm of the general plan, the general plan process can promote coordination with school districts and help align school modernization and reinvestment with the general plan.

Planning for active lifestyles also benefits the elderly. The “Aging in Place” concept focuses on enabling seniors to stay in their own homes and communities. Also known as Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORC), these areas prioritize creating walkable communities to accommodate their needs and provide access to full services such as stores, clinics, and social programming.

Furthermore, providing parks and natural recreation opportunities and access to green space is vital to good health, allowing easy access to physical activity and relief from urban stress. As more compact development occurs, it is important to ensure access to adequate green space for all community members.

Social Connection & Safety

The physical environment can have a significant impact on health and wellbeing, but the social structures and how citizens engage within the physical space can be equally important. Feeling connected to neighbors, feeling safe in one’s home, and having a robust supportive social network has been shown to affect physical and mental health.^{xxii} A neighborhood can be well designed and offer amenities, but if the local residents perceive the area to be unsafe, or it is unsafe, it will not be utilized to its full capacity. Design

principles can be implemented with this in mind. Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) examines environmental conditions that have unintended consequences on behavior.^{xxiii} This field of research combines evaluating place and human interaction. CPTED uses design elements to control access, provide more opportunities for passive observation of what is occurring in the area, and encourage civic engagement to maintain properties. An important aspect of implementing CPTED includes a wide multi-sector, such as with law enforcement- and community engagement process to define the problems, opportunities, and solutions. Civic participation and social cohesion can be supported through the design of community spaces that provide engagement, access to learning opportunities, quality interaction of citizens, multi-generational connections, public services such as libraries, and cultural and art facilities. Joint use agreements with schools allow for another opportunity to collaborate with school districts, maximize resource utilization, and foster more activated spaces that otherwise would be empty during non-work hours.

A safe community with active streets includes protection from criminal activity, as well as from avoidable accidents. Many design elements such as narrower streets, intensity-appropriate lighting, improved signage, and slower speed limits can help reduce accidents. Traffic calming measures, complete streets, and improvement of physical infrastructure are important components of injury prevention. As referenced in the circulation element, the California Complete Streets Act of 2008 (AB 1358) requires local jurisdictions, upon any substantial revision of the circulation element, to plan for a “balanced, multimodal transportation network that meets the needs of all users of the streets, roads, and highways for safe and convenient travel in a manner that is suitable to the rural, suburban, or urban context of the general plan.”^{xxiv} The circulation element can be an excellent place to incorporate design for safety and multimodal use. The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Street Design guidelines, formally endorsed by Caltrans in 2014, offer excellent examples and a blueprint to guide complete street policy implementation, particularly around priority sites such as schools and daycare centers.^{xxv}

Housing

Housing affordability, location, and quality have major health implications. Also special housing considerations factor into planning such as housing to accommodate special groups such as homeless populations, marginally housed, individuals with disabilities, and aging populations. The [housing element](#) allows jurisdictions to identify opportunities and adopt policies to promote positive health outcomes. State Housing Element law, including the Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA) process, a.k.a, “fair share” planning, fundamentally addresses equity issues, and related planning and zoning laws require regional and local governments to adopt plans for increasing, improving and preserving the State’s housing supply for all income groups.

Location of housing plays a central role in how individuals and families engage in their communities, particularly for the elderly population with the growing interest to “age in place.” Neighborhoods with accessible transit and active transportation infrastructure offer opportunities for access to employment, schools, and services. If the neighborhood is safe, housing located near parks and green space provides recreational opportunities. Housing location can influence ease of access to fresh food and produce.

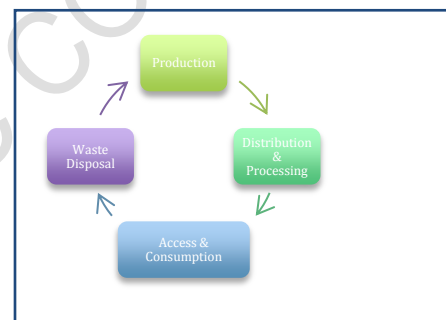
The quality of available housing stock has direct health implications. Older housing that has not been maintained or updated can lead to physically unsafe conditions such as pest infestation, water intrusion, mold, poor insulation, and exposure to toxins such as lead. Water intrusion, poor insulation, and mold can exacerbate respiratory illnesses such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Lead exposure, a known neurotoxin, can have lifelong health consequences for young exposed children.

In addition to the quality of housing, affordability is a key factor. Access to affordable housing helps alleviate undue stress suffered from unstable living conditions. Often, since

families are on fixed incomes, affordable housing allows them to use remaining income towards other goods and services, health care needs, and basic necessities such as healthy food. When housing prices rise, household occupancy rates often increase, becoming overcrowded, leading to unsafe living conditions and increased risk for spread of infectious disease. Rising rents can also lead to displacement of residents resulting in a disruption of social networks and school attendance, and can change the fabric of the local community. Given the health impacts of having access to safe, decent, and affordable housing it remains critical jurisdictions appropriately plan for variety of housing types.

Nutrition & Food Systems

The paradigm around access to healthy food has been shifting nationally as the percent of obese adults and children has been on the rise. In addition to public health messages targeted at individual behavior, the focus also now includes policy around food access. Over consumption of less nutritional food is a component of



the problem as well as lack of access to enough healthy, fresh food. Some areas struggle with food deserts, areas that do not have adequate physical access to nutritious healthy foods.^{xxvi} Many Californians have experienced food insecurity, defined as a time when they could not afford enough food or had to forgo other basic life expenses to buy food.^{xxvii} Although foods choices are for individuals to decide, those choices are made within the context of what is accessible and affordable. Access to healthy food is a critical factor to better nutrition.^{xxviii} New research also shows the lifetime risk of developing diabetes in the US population is on the rise with nearly a 40 percent risk to develop diabetes during the average lifespan, further supporting the need to improve nutrition.^{xxix}

Increasing access to healthy foods can occur in multiple ways, such as zoning for and opening grocery stores in underserved areas, providing policies to increase access to farmers markets, promoting community gardens, working with local convenience stores to increase affordable fresh produce selection, and using food procurement policies. California is the largest and most diverse producer of healthy foods and commodities in the nation.

The American Planning Association recently completed a national scan of planning documents addressing food issues, and compiled findings into a policy report, [*Planning for Food Access and Community Based Food Systems*](#). CDFA's [*Farm to Fork*](#) office provides information on programs to improve food access. In addition, local and regional collaboratives can help address food access issues in the global sense, including evaluating policies that cover the range of food system issues from production, distribution and processing, access and consumption, through the end of the cycle to waste disposal. According to the USDA, "a community food system is one in which 'food production, processing, distribution and consumption are integrated to enhance the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health of a particular place.'"^{xxx}

General Plans can support protecting agricultural land for production as well as establishing a framework to support and encourage local food production in the form of community gardens and zoning. Integrated transportation systems connecting regional networks can ensure distribution and processing that has a lower carbon footprint and is more sustainable. Also, local access can help reduce trip generation, promote locally sourced food and general plan policies can support mixed use for food retail, farmers markets, and other food stores. Waste disposal has been a component of some local general plans as local jurisdictions have gone toward zero waste policies.

All of the policies to support improved access to fresh food are not only important for health, but also for community resilience.

Environmental Health

Exposures to various toxic substances in air, water, and soil can significantly affect health. Noise, when extreme can also be considered a health hazard. Diseases such as asthma, birth defects, cancer, heart disease, neurologic disorders, and reproductive disorders can be linked to toxins in the environment. In addition, certain geographic areas and communities experience a disproportionate share of exposure to environmental toxins. As a result, compatible siting should be considered in the context of housing, childcare, and businesses. . Siting of childcare is particularly important since children are more prone to exposure of toxic substances due to their developmental stage. Childcare sites are often sited in

residential or mixed-use zones. When sited in a residential use zone it is usually safer since it avoids siting near incompatible uses. Occasionally, sites are in commercial or industrial zones. If this occurs, it is important to ensure there are not hazards. Although school siting occurs outside of the general plan, local planning agencies can provide information to school districts and other entities involved in locating services to avoid location near higher-risk areas, such as near businesses producing toxic substances, agricultural land where pesticides are used, or areas with poor air quality. Additionally, providing guidance on buffer zones and limiting certain types of uses can help minimize toxic exposure.

Air quality can also be a relevant consideration for public health. Of course, air quality varies from day to day and can be affected by many environmental factors as well as the emission sources, prevailing winds, and natural terrain. Most jurisdictions are not required to address air quality in their general plan,²⁰ although some have chosen to do so voluntarily. For additional discussion see [Social Equity, Environmental Justice, and Community Resilience Chapter](#).

Health & Human Services

Hospitals and clinics are increasingly recognizing that where patients live, learn, work, go to school and play affects their health and wellbeing. Through new paradigms and innovation, they are considering what community services are necessary to support health for individuals in their community. Non-profit hospitals conduct community health needs assessments as part of their community tax requirements and can reinvest into the community based on the assessment. Increased access to health care, physical activity opportunities, and healthy foods are often key priorities to improve community health. General Plan policies can improve all of these and particular planning decisions can improve access to health services through integrated public transportation and provisions for access to broadband and thus allow for telemedicine capacity.

General plan policies authorizing or promoting supportive housing can facilitate the integration of healthcare services into multifamily housing developments, especially for the

²⁰ See Air Quality chapter

elderly and disabled. A number of housing developments in major metropolitan areas include health clinics, and community spaces, and tenant services for special needs populations.^{xxxii} Supportive services have multiple benefits, for both tenants and property management. Integrated service delivery plays a critical role with populations at risk of homelessness or institutionalization. Healthcare providers have started to bring farmer's markets and gardens on clinic and hospital premises to facilitate access to healthy food for their staff and patients.

Clinic locations, particularly federally qualified health centers, serve as important meeting points and services in case of a disaster. Having established systems in place to ensure access to routine services allow for a more robust and resilient system during times of emergency.

Health Data and Mapping

Data, Mapping, and Tools

Defining existing conditions is part of the General Plan update. Incorporating health data creates an opportunity to conduct a more comprehensive existing condition analysis and also serves as a means to provide baseline data to track progress, particularly for the social, economic, and environmental factors that can impact health. The housing element section includes analysis of community characteristics related to population characteristics, economic conditions and well-being, housing needs, and special populations. These issues all have health implications. As more and more local jurisdictions have started to incorporate explicit health considerations, Geospatial data can be used to analyze health outcomes at a geographic level and to inform how health considerations might be incorporated or targeted. Additional tools such as walk audits, charrettes, community-based visual cataloging, and new crowd sourcing platforms can be an effective means of getting communities involved for more local and qualitative data.

Data is informing policy in innovative ways. Just as a physician would look at vital signs of a patient, cities and counties have started to look at vital signs or community dashboards that are reflective of how the population's health is fairing and other indicators that reflect the social, economic, and environmental conditions. This type of analytic measurement can be

particularly informative when examining areas that are disproportionately burdened by poor health outcomes and help target needed resources towards more vulnerable populations. It can also provide a baseline for analytic discussion on location of services, where to prioritize new or update current infrastructure, and provide a means for tracking outcomes of development and infrastructure investments over time. See [Social Equity, Environmental Justice, and Community Resilience Chapter](#) for a more in-depth discussion on addressing vulnerable populations.

Additional Health Data Resources

Many indicators for health, social, environmental, and economic indicators are available at the census tract level. Health departments also have access to local data that is occasionally available at a more granular level. Some additional health data resources include:

- [**Community Health Needs Assessment:**](#) This free web-based platform was created to assist community hospitals doing their needs assessment and provides census level data for health, economic, social, environmental, and behavioral data.
- [**California Environmental Health Tracking Program:**](#) This program is hosted by the CDPH. The data is more focused on environmental health impacts such as air quality, health, climate change related outcomes, water quality, and cancer prevalence.
- [**Envirostor:**](#) This program is hosted by the Department of Toxic Substances Control. It is a database that provides data in a GIS form to identify contaminated sites as well as facilities that deal with hazardous waste. This resource is important for remediation and siting.
- [**CalEnviroscreen:**](#) The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) in the California Environmental Protection Agency created this online mapping tool. It is a tool that can help identify communities that are burdened with high levels of pollution.
- [**Healthy Communities Data and Indicators Project \(HCI\):**](#) HCI is hosted by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). This indicator list provides evidence for the link to health outcomes, data sources, and provides the ability to create maps.
- [**California Health Interview Survey \(CHIS\):**](#) The largest state health survey in the nation, CHIS is a random phone interview administered by the UCLA Center for

Health Policy in conjunction with the State Department of Public Health and the Department of Health Care Services.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

<i>Health & Health Behavior Related</i>	<i>Intent of Analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
	Life expectancy can be a good proxy for general health and well-being in the community. Many low-income areas suffer from early mortality and morbidity.	Life Expectancy at Birth
	Asthma can be worsened by environmental triggers such as poor air quality, poor housing quality, and climate change, examining baseline conditions can help inform siting decisions.	Asthma (Prevalence, ED visits, hospitalizations)
	Obesity is caused by many factors, but lack of access to healthy foods and physical activity are significant contributors. Examining baseline status can help with policy decisions around active transportation, recreation priorities, and food system policies.	Obesity (child and adult) prevalence
	These diseases, also caused by many factors, are often associated with obesity. Examining baseline status can help with policy decisions around active transportation, recreation priorities, and food system policies.	Secondary diseases from obesity (high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, type 2 diabetes prevalence)
	Many accidents involving pedestrians and bicycles could be improved through infrastructure, design, and signage. Examining a baseline can inform policy and planning for transit routes, active transportation, and safety.	Unintentional injury such as pedestrian and bicycle accidents
	Walk trips is a behavior that benefits health and is influenced by the environment. Examining a baseline number can help inform active transportation and for	Walk trips per capita

	climate change and resiliency policy.	
	Children walking, biking, or rolling to school is a behavior that can improve health and is influenced by the environmental conditions such as distance to school and safety. Examining the baseline condition can inform policy priorities around active transportation, active design, school siting, and housing siting.	Percent of children who walk, bike, roll to school
	Commuting decisions also can be influenced by connectivity, cost and ease of use. Active transportation can have positive health benefits since people are able to achieve higher physical activity. Examining the baseline can inform policy priorities around active transportation, mixed use developments, job locations, and housing locations.	Percent of commuters who use active transportation
	Eating more fruits and vegetables is a behavior that can be supported through more access to healthy, affordable options. Examining a baseline condition can inform policy around food systems, location of services, and mixed use developments.	Consumption of daily fruits and vegetables
	Understanding the poverty conditions can help focus resources and policy development to areas that need additional support.	Poverty data for population below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level
	Income is an important predictor of health outcomes. Access to job opportunities as well as job/housing/work force fit can inform transit lines, housing location, and where jobs are incentivized to locate.	Employment Density (example: Trade Transportation, utility, leisure, hospitality, goods producing, government, education, real estate, finance, health services)
	Mapping baseline food retail and access conditions can identify areas that might not have adequate access and inform policy priorities and decisions for siting.	Food retail, community garden, and farmer market location

Social, Economic, or Environmental Related	Mapping baseline walk and bike conditions can help create a more connected network for improved use.	Walk and bike maps
	Mapping baseline conditions can help identify areas that could benefit from improved transportation options	Public transit facilities
	Safety in the neighborhood can impact social stress and influence whether people will be active. Establishing a baseline condition can help inform safety policies such as crime prevention through environmental design.	Percent of people that feel safe in their neighborhoods
	Air quality has direct effects on people with respiratory disease. Mapping baseline conditions can help inform policies around transportation, connectivity, siting, and industry.	Air quality (ozone, pm 2.5)
	Extreme heat days and heat island effects can cause illness and even death in extreme circumstances. Monitoring heat days and areas with worse heat effects can help inform policies around transit, greening, materials, and programs to mitigate its effects.	Extreme Heat Days, heat islands effects
	Urban canopy can have multiple benefits for air quality, shade for easier time spent outdoors for commuting and recreation, and even new research on the benefits of mental health and mood. Establishing a baseline can help inform policy for transit, roadway, recreation, and bike and pedestrian planning.	Urban canopy
	Health facilities provide daily services and often serve the community in disaster. Establishing a baseline of where services are located can help improve transit decisions, siting, and emergency preparedness planning.	Location of health facilities
	Mapping where schools and child facilities are can provide an important baseline. This can inform policies	Location of schools, child care facilities

	to leverage joint use agreements, ensure they are accessible and free from newly sited environmental hazards.	
	How much people drive is a great proxy to understand how active community members are. New research suggests that the amount of time spent in a vehicle may have potential effects on mental and physical health.	VMT

OPR Recommended Policies

A full list of recommended policies can be found [here](#)

As is the case throughout the entire general plan, many of the policies have relation to other elements. This is particularly true with the health-related policies, below are some of the top priorities for consideration. A full appendix of example health related polices are in appendix A.

Policy	Example	Relation to other elements
[city, county] shall prioritize Transit Oriented Development that connects housing to local jobs		Circulation, land use, housing, economic development, social equity, climate change
[city, county] shall provide job training opportunities that match resident skill to locally available jobs		Economic development, social equity
[city, county] shall require employment centers to provide traffic demand management to support alternate commutes to work		Circulation, land use, climate change
[city, county] shall site anchor institutions in transit- oriented corridors		Circulation, land use, housing, economic development, social equity, climate change

[city, county] shall encourage local employers to sponsor workplace wellness programs		economic development, social equity
[city, county] shall incorporate existing pedestrian, bike, and/or Safe Routes to School Plans		Circulation, land use, housing, social equity, climate change
[city, county] shall Integrate plans for public health implications of climate change		Social equity, climate change
[city, county] shall establish a food policy council		Land use, economic development, social equity

Chapter 6: Social Equity, Environmental Justice, & Community Resilience

Designing Healthy, Equitable, Resilient, and Economically Vibrant Places

"The future is not someplace we are going to, but a place we are creating. The paths to it are not found, they are made."

--Jane Garvey

Introduction

Addressing equity in policy decisions is vital for community well-being, the economy, and health of the population. Studies show the relationship between zip code and life expectancy, with lower life expectancy frequently in the most disadvantaged areas.^{xxxii} In addition to infrastructure investments and locations, policies to support community engagement and the human capital in local communities is vital to create more thriving, healthy, and equitable places.^{xxxiii} Additionally, there are significant demographic shifts taking place across California including more aging seniors, increasing ethnic diversity, and changing household structures.^{xxxiv}

Using a social equity lens in the general plan process is one important mechanism to ensure more equitable access to opportunity in cities and counties and greater environmental justice throughout California.^{xxxv} Many professional disciplines such as Transportation, Housing, Agriculture, Energy, Economic Development, Land Use, Health, and Education are increasingly using a social equity lens to inform policy.^{xxxvi xxxvii}

Equity has been advocated as a framework for urban planning since the 1960s. The concept recognizes that through expanding choices and services to those with limited options, local jurisdictions could work towards improved planning outcomes.^{xxxviii}

The environmental justice (EJ) movement gained momentum in the 1980s and was strengthened by President Clinton's Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-income Populations" in 1994.^{xxxix} The Environmental Protection Agency acknowledges "equitable development draws on both environmental justice and smart growth."^{xl}

There are several overlapping definitions and frameworks to contextualize social equity, EJ, and disadvantaged communities with ongoing robust conversation to refine these definitions. In fact, EJ as a field has undergone tremendous transition

both in research and on the ground as groups have worked to expand access to services, healthy food, affordable housing, and expand beyond the work that traditionally focused on the disproportionate burden of pollution and contaminants suffered by many communities of color.^{xlix}

AB 1553 (Keeley, Chapter 762, Statutes of 2001) requires OPR to provide guidance for local jurisdictions to incorporate Environmental Justice Considerations

(1) Propose methods for planning for the equitable distribution of new public facilities and services that increase and enhance community quality of life throughout the community, given the fiscal and legal constraints that restrict the siting of these facilities.

(2) Propose methods for providing for the location, if any, of industrial facilities and uses that, even with the best available

technology, will contain or produce material that, because of its quantity, concentration, or physical or chemical characteristics,

poses a significant hazard to human health and safety, in a manner that seeks to avoid over-concentrating these uses in proximity to schools or residential dwellings.

(3) Propose methods for providing for the location of new schools and residential dwellings in a manner that seeks to avoid locating these uses in proximity to industrial facilities and uses that will contain or produce material that because of its quantity, concentration, or physical or chemical characteristics, poses a significant hazard to human health and safety.

(4) Propose methods for promoting more livable communities by expanding opportunities for transit-oriented development so that residents minimize traffic and pollution impacts from traveling for purposes of work, shopping, schools, and recreation.

Incorporating social equity in the General Plan- What does it mean?

It means:

- Improved access to healthy, green places to play
- More reliable transit options
- Increased safe roads and sidewalks
- Ensuring access to affordable housing options
- Creating spaces for all ages and abilities
- Improved access to jobs
- Active inclusion in governmental processes, programs, and decisions

It is impossible to fully separate the concepts of social equity and EJ because they are intertwined. However, for practical reasons, in this chapter we will first consider broader social equity issues. Incorporating equity in land use planning is a key component to achieving EJ and generally more equitable outcomes across

communities. This chapter explores how planning decisions can affect equitable opportunity in a community and how local jurisdictions can incorporate a social equity lens in their planning process with definitions of commonly used terms as related to disadvantaged communities. Using a social equity lens is a first step in addressing EJ considerations, but more specific considerations are necessary to adequately address EJ, which this chapter provides. Additionally, examples are provided for how incorporating social equity in general plans will improve community resilience.

Correlations Between Elements

	Land Use	Circulation	Housing	Conservation	Open Space	Noise	Safety
Social Equity and Environmental	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

● Identified in statute ■ Closely related to statutory requirements

Social Equity

Incorporating equity considerations with regard to race, ethnicity, gender, age, income, and physical ability throughout the general plan update from outreach to policy to implementation can have important outcomes at the local, regional, and state level.

Programs are increasingly incorporating an equity lens in the decision and policy-making process to ensure better decisions.^{xliii}

Social equity in the policy context can be defined as “the fair, just, and equitable management of all institutions serving the public directly or by contract; the fair, just and equitable distribution of public services and implementation of public policy; and the commitment to promote fairness, justice, and equity in the formation of public policy.”^{xliv}

[SB 244](#), passed in 2011, specifically recognized that many disadvantaged unincorporated communities lacked adequate investment in infrastructure such as sidewalks, safe drinking water, and adequate waste processing. This lack of adequate investment threatens both

[Chico's General Plan Vision 2030- Inclusion of Social Equity](#)

“For the purposes of this General Plan, social equity means fair access to housing, transportation, jobs, education, and recreation, and access for all residents to fully participate in the political and cultural life of the community. Social equity is closely connected to the other two sustainability components of economic vitality and environmental protection. It both depends on and supports a local, diverse economy that provides a wide range of work and volunteer opportunities for people of all ages and skills and a healthy environment with clean air and water, open spaces to recreate, and protection from potential hazards. Strategies in this General Plan that promote social equity include ensuring adequate housing for all age and income levels; providing an open government that values public participation; celebrating arts and cultures; assisting the more vulnerable members of the community; supporting the development and preservation of complete neighborhoods, promoting public health through protection from hazards and the provision of a safe multimodal circulation system; and providing parks and quality public services to all members of the community.”

health and safety of residents and creates more inequity in terms of access to quality services.^{xlv} SB244 created procedural requirements to identify these areas of risk and update policies within the local general plan to improve conditions. See OPR’s [Technical Advisory on SB244](#).

In the context of creating a general plan, one can think about distribution and access to resources within a neighborhood that help provide opportunity to thrive and protection from harmful elements that will make it difficult for a particular community to prosper and reach their full potential.

Cities and counties can prioritize access to public facilities and services that enhance quality of life, including, but not limited to, public transportation options connected to job centers,

housing, parks, open space, trails, greenbelts, recreational facilities (including senior and youth centers), community centers, grocery stores, health care facilities, child care centers, libraries, and cultural centers. Considering the number, quality, and access to facilities is important. For example, with regard to access, transportation decisions are informed by commute times. However, commute times are calculated during certain hours. Often service sector commuters travel at later or earlier hours and regular commuter calculations do not adequately capture service sector needs.

Many forms of inequity are not intentional, but manifest themselves in terms of process or results. Therefore, by increasing awareness and modifying practices, jurisdictions can improve processes. Geographic inequity describes a situation in which the burdens of undesirable land uses are concentrated in certain neighborhoods while the benefits are received elsewhere. It also describes a situation in which public amenities are concentrated only in certain areas.

Examples of Procedural Inequity	Examples of Geographic Inequity
"Stacking" commissions or committees with certain interests while not taking into account the interests of other segments of the community, such as minority and low-income residents.	Certain neighborhoods have a disproportionate share of waste disposal facilities, while the benefits of such facilities are received by the community or region as a whole
Holding meetings at times or in locations that minimize the ability of certain groups or individuals to participate.	Certain neighborhoods have ample community centers, parks, and open space and thus experience more of the environmental benefits associated with these amenities, while other neighborhoods have fewer such amenities.
Using English-only written or verbal communication when a non-English speaking population will be affected by a planning decision.	Certain neighborhoods have more access to healthy food retail, banks, or transit options. In contrast, some neighborhoods have an abundance of less healthy retail, due to differing land uses.
Enforcement of city codes and policies	Certain municipal services, such as libraries,

through a complaint system only accessible by some (such as online or during specified hours)	after school programs, and recreation services, are not available in some neighborhoods
Requiring lower levels of mitigation for projects affecting low-income or minority populations.	Certain neighborhoods have a disproportionate share of industrial facilities that handle or produce hazardous waste, while the economic benefits are distributed to other neighborhoods (in the form of jobs and tax revenue).

Definitions

In conversations about equity terms such as underserved, low-income, disadvantaged, or environmental justice community are often interchanged but can potentially have different meanings depending on the context.

In discussions about equity, it is important to clarify terminology. For instance, one could reference a disadvantaged community while referring to an elderly or disabled population that does not have adequate access to transit options. Alternatively, disadvantaged could refer to children who do not have access to safe places to play. Several common terms have statutory definitions and others are used more generally. Additionally, many state and federal programs utilize the statutory definitions to determine funding for programs. Some of the most applicable to local planning are below and apply where there is no other prevailing statutory definition: Some of the more common definitions are below:

Statutory definitions

Disadvantaged Community– [Public Resources Code Section 75005, Water Code Section 79505.5](#) A “Disadvantaged Community” is a community with a median household income less than 80 percent of the statewide median household income.

“Severely disadvantaged community” means a community with a median household income less than 60 percent of the statewide average.

Disadvantaged Unincorporated Community as per [SB244/GC Section 65302.10 \(a\)](#)

- **“Community”** means an inhabited area within a city or county that is comprised of no less than 10 dwellings adjacent or in close proximity to one another.
- **“Disadvantaged unincorporated community”** means a fringe, island, or legacy community in which the median household income is 80 percent or less than the statewide median household income.
- **“Island community”** means any inhabited and unincorporated territory that is surrounded or substantially surrounded by one or more cities or by one or more cities and a county boundary or the Pacific Ocean.
- **“Fringe community”** means any inhabited and unincorporated territory that is within a city’s sphere of influence.
- **“Legacy community”** means a geographically isolated community that is inhabited and has existed for at least 50 years

Environmental justice [Government Code 65040.12\(e\)](#)

EJ is defined in state planning law as the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

Health Equity [Health and Safety Code 131019.5](#)

Recognizes "determinants of equity" means social, economic, geographic, political, and physical environmental conditions that lead to the creation of a fair and just society. Furthermore, "Health equity" means efforts to ensure that all people have full and equal access to opportunities that enable them to lead healthy lives.

Government Funding Perspectives

Some land use related funding programs also incorporate equity considerations and have slightly different qualifying definitions for disadvantaged communities. AB 32 ([The Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006](#)) commits California to reduce GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. A key part of the strategy to reduce GHG was the implementation of the Cap and Trade Program. The Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF), established in 2012, receives auction proceeds from Cap and Trade and directs how funds are administered. [SB 535](#)^{xlvi}, signed into law in September 2012, requires that 25% of the proceeds benefit disadvantaged communities and that 10% of project funds be used within disadvantaged communities. The bill requires the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) to identify the disadvantaged communities.

CalEPA developed the [EnviroScreen](#) tool to help define these communities. Several programs, including the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program, administered by the Strategic Growth Council, rely on this tool.

The [Active Transportation Program](#) consolidates many state and federal programs into one program to be administered by the California Department of Transportation. This program ensures that at least 25% of the funds benefit disadvantaged communities. This program allows communities to qualify as disadvantaged if one of three criteria is met including: ^{xlvi}

1. The median household income is less than 80% of the statewide median
2. The area is identified by Cal EnviroScreen in the most disadvantaged 25% of the state
3. At least 75% of public school students in the project area meet eligibility criteria to receive free or reduced-price meals

Incorporating a Social Equity Lens

Cities and counties may incorporate equity into their general plans in several ways. To incorporate equity it is helpful to consider 1) Data, Mapping, and Tools; 2) Community Engagement and Partnership; and 3) Incorporating supportive policies.

Data, Mapping, and Tools

An important step in the process of incorporating equity considerations is to assess baseline conditions and acknowledge existing disparities. Jurisdictions have to collect at least jurisdiction-wide socioeconomic data during the preparation of the housing element, such as income level and persons with special housing needs (elderly, farmworkers, single head of household, etc.). However, a more complete socioeconomic picture of the community can be analyzed using smaller geographic data sets, less than jurisdiction-wide, such as census tracts, which allows a comparison of different areas throughout a community. Many of the suggested data is available in the [GPG mapping tool](#).

Data sources specifically help evaluate equity and EJ considerations:

- **Census Data**: The United States Census collects data on a range of factors. The [American Community Survey](#) is conducted annually.
- **Regional Opportunity Index, UC Davis Tool**^{xlvi}: This tool provides an index based on social, economic, and environmental indicators for review and analysis by local citizens, program managers, and policy makers to inform investment decisions.
- **Local data**: Local data on amenities available.
- **Envirostor**: This program is hosted by the Department of Toxic Substances Control. It is a database that provides data in a GIS form to identify contaminated sites as well as facilities that deal with hazardous waste.
- **CalEnviroscreen**: The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) in the California Environmental Protection Agency created this online mapping tool. It is a tool that can help identify communities that are burdened with high levels of pollution.
- **California Environmental Health Tracking Program**: The California Department of Public Health created this online mapping tool. It is a tool that helps identify environmental risks associated with health outcomes such as poor air quality and asthma.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
	Different segments of the population have	Population by age

Social, Economic, or Environmental	different needs. For instance, elderly populations might need more time to cross the street or need specific accommodations to use public transit.	
	Understanding the ethnic distribution throughout the city and/or county can help inform languages used in outreach and cultural considerations for engagement.	Population by race/ethnicity
	Understanding characteristics such as single parent households, larger family households, age, etc. can help inform priority amenities in an area	Population by household type
	Life expectancy is often used as a good proxy measure for overall health. There can be significant variation by zip code in life expectancy. Resources could be targeted in these areas as well as additional grant opportunities leveraged.	Life Expectancy
	Overall balance of resources is important to create a livable community.	Location of amenities such as parks, health care facilities, housing, job corridors, and water-related services

Community Engagement and Partnerships

Robust community engagement to capture all voices within the community from the beginning of the general plan update is vital to creating a shared vision with significant community support, creating a plan that is more likely to acknowledge community challenges and accurately account for existing community assets. Partnership and engagement with diverse stakeholders also helps create more support for the plan during the approval process. There are many actions a local agency can take to support engagement from all sectors and groups within the local community. Focused outreach effort to specific groups that work on equity issues within the community, such as local community-based organizations, can be an effective way to incorporate an equity lens.

Often, outreach is overseen by consultants assisting with the General Plan update. It is also helpful to have a city or county staff assigned to serve as a liaison or oversee the outreach process for continuity after the consultant finishes the project. This also provides for consistent and ongoing communication after plan adoption and implementation updates with the community.

As emphasized in the second chapter, [A Vision for Long-Range Planning](#), working in partnership with local agencies is important to provide coordination and accomplish many of the policies to provide more equitable access to resources. [The Community Engagement and Partnership chapter](#) provides more detailed guidance on ways to effectively engage with the community.

Incorporating Supportive Policies

An analysis of existing conditions combined with robust community input can help bring particular policy issues to the forefront for discussion. As policy priorities are established, formulating strong policy language is a key first step. For example, rather than “consider implementing” use the word “implement.” Also, instead of using the phrase “consider the development of,” use “develop and implement.” Additionally, to create more actionable policy language use “priority on” rather than “emphasis on” to highlight policy areas of particular focus.

Environmental Justice

A social equity lens in the planning process is an important initial step towards achieving more equitable outcomes and environmental justice. It tends to be most helpful when planning toward future development. Many EJ issues require specific remediation efforts, or more in-depth policy and siting considerations with regard to specific environmental exposures. Additionally, some jurisdictions have created a stand-alone element that weaves together policy to ensure more equitable access to services, food, safe places to play, and EJ issues. The adoption of an EJ element is consistent with [Section 65303](#) of the State of California Government Code. There are benefits to having a separate EJ element because it

can be easier for the public and decision-makers to see EJ-related policies in one place. At the same time, an integrated approach puts EJ-related policies into the elements that address those issues; for example, including siting of industries into the land use element could make implementation more actionable. Regardless of approach, the EJ-related policies must meet internal consistency rules set forth in [Government Code Section 65300.5](#). EJ policies carry the same legal weight as the required elements once the final general plan is adopted. Ultimately, the best format will depend on the local context, community interest, and should complement the overall general plan update and vision. Whether incorporated into a separate element or addressed throughout the document, explicitly considering siting compatibility, location of industrial facilities, and siting of sensitive populations is important to achieve EJ. Additionally, inserting policies that may help mitigate existing injustices.

Compatibility

At the general plan level, discussions about environmental justice involve a central [land use](#) concept: compatibility. The primary purpose of planning, and the source of government authority to engage in planning, is to protect the public health, safety, and welfare. Incompatible land uses may create health, safety, and welfare issues for the community.

Traditional, rigid separation of land uses has resulted in disconnected islands of activity and contributed to sprawl. Development patterns characterized by single-use result in the automobile being the only viable transportation option, which results in high environmental, economic, health, and social costs.

Incorporating general plan policies to encourage equity while protecting residential and school land uses requires an understanding of compatibility combined with an interest in equity. Encouraging mixed use development, proximity to transit corridors, and access to employment, education, commercial centers, services, and recreation should be considered alongside specific uses that will always be incompatible with residential and school uses.

Residential and school uses are impacted by incompatible land uses that have environmental effects, such as noise, air emissions (including dust), and exposure to hazardous materials. The compatibility problem also operates in reverse. Incompatible uses adjacent to residential units, schools, or environmentally sensitive areas may also suffer

negative consequences in the form of higher mitigation costs or the curtailment of economic activities. Specific examples of land use incompatibility include:

- Residential, childcare, and school uses in proximity to industrial facilities and other uses that, even with the best available technology, will contain or produce materials that, because of their quantity, concentration, or physical or chemical characteristics, pose a significant hazard to human health and safety.
- Residential, childcare, and school uses adjacent to intensive agricultural uses.
- Residential, childcare, and school uses adjacent to major thoroughfares, such as highways.
- Residential or commercial uses in proximity to resource utilization activities, such as mining or oil and gas wells.

Industrial Facilities and Large Scale Agricultural Lands

Facilities that emit, handle, store, or dispose of hazardous materials are regulated by a variety of agencies. These agencies include local [Certified Unified Program Agencies](#). However, cities and counties, as the local land use authority, are primarily responsible for the location and distribution of potentially hazardous industrial facilities through their general plans and zoning ordinances.

Cities and counties may pursue several strategies within their general plans to address over-concentration which occurs when two or more industrial facilities or uses, which do not individually exceed acceptable regulatory standards for public health and safety, but pose a significant hazard due to their cumulative effects.

Strategies may include incorporating policies for the following areas:

- **Buffer zones between industry and residential land uses.**

Buffer zones are a broad approach to land use compatibility. Buffer zone policies may be approached in one of two ways. The general plan land use diagram may designate transitional land uses between industrial and agricultural and residential areas. Transitional uses may include open space, light industry, office uses, business parks, or heavy commercial uses. The land use policies for these buffer areas should prohibit school uses. Appropriate distances for buffer areas will vary

depending on local circumstances. Factors such as the intensity of nearby residential uses, prevailing winds, geographic features, and the types of facilities and uses allowed in industrial areas should be considered.

Buffer zones may be implemented at the project level. One weakness of general buffer zone policies is the difficulty of making a priori decisions about how much distance is needed to minimize potential health and safety hazards to residential and school uses. A stronger approach may be buffer policies aimed at individual siting decisions.

- **Project siting decisions.**

Approval of certain industrial facilities or uses can be made conditional if they are within a certain distance of residential or school uses and/or contain or produce hazardous materials. This allows the city or county to consider the potential hazards associated with individual facilities or uses on a case-by-case basis. General plan policies can outline consistent standards to be used in approving, conditionally approving, or denying proposed locations for industrial facilities and other uses that may pose a significant hazard to human health and safety. Such standards should be reflected in the zoning ordinance that implements the general plan (see [Implementation Chapter](#)).

- **Capping the number of certain facilities and uses.**

Another policy response to over-concentration is to cap the number of potentially hazardous facilities within a certain distance of each other. For example, the State of Georgia does not allow siting of a new solid waste facility if two such facilities already exist within a two mile radius of the proposed facility. While capping policies are easy to implement and understandable to the public, they have serious drawbacks. Without analyzing the type, quantity, and concentration of materials to be contained or produced at a proposed facility, it is difficult to determine the number of facilities that would create a situation of over-concentration.

- **Changing land use designations in over-concentrated areas.**

One way to address existing or potential future problems of over-concentration is to change the land use designation for existing industrial areas. This approach differs from buffer zones in that buffer zones affect the land use designation of areas adjacent to existing or proposed industrial areas. Changing the allowable land uses in existing industrial areas prevents new industrial land uses from being established and may affect the expansion of existing facilities and uses (depending on how local policies treat pre-existing or "legal non-conforming," land uses).

An important caveat is to consider what new uses will be allowed in the previously industrial areas. A new environmental justice problem could be created if residences and schools are allowed without considering any lingering effects of industrial over-concentration. At the same time, where over-concentration is no longer an issue and effective remediation or clean-up is possible, so-called "brownfield" development is an important tool for a community's continued sustainable development.

New Residential Uses and Schools

Cities and counties should provide for the location of new schools and residential dwellings in a manner that avoids locating these uses in proximity to industrial facilities and agricultural lands and uses that will contain or produce materials that, because of their quantity, concentration, or physical or chemical characteristics, pose a significant hazard to human health and safety.

The location of new residential and school development is the flip side of the problem discussed in the section above. Given the need for new housing and schools and given the need to make efficient use of land, how do

Legal Requirements: CEQA and School Siting

CEQA requires that the environmental document prepared for a new school identify whether the proposed site is any of the following: a current or former hazardous waste or solid waste disposal facility, a hazardous substances release site identified by DTSC, the site of one or more pipelines that carry hazardous substances, or located within a quarter mile of a facility that emits hazardous air emissions or handles acutely hazardous material (Public Resources Code §21151.8). for sites within 500 feet of a busy traffic corridor, the school board must determine through modeling that neither short term nor long term air quality exposure poses significant health risks to pupils (Ed Code 17213) If such facilities exist, the school board must make findings that the facilities would not endanger the health of those attending or employed by the proposed school or that existing corrective measures would result in the mitigation of any health endangerment.

cities and counties deal with existing over-concentration of industrial uses? When designating areas for residential development, the city or county should identify any areas of over-concentration. Appropriate buffers should be placed between over-concentrated industrial and agricultural areas and new residential areas. Using their authority over the approval and design of subdivisions, cities and counties may develop policies and standards related to industrial over-concentration and new residential subdivision approvals. These policies could include buffer zones, as well as the criteria to be used for rejecting new residential development (such as standards for risk to human health and safety from nearby industrial facilities and uses).

The location of new schools is of particular concern to both local governments and school districts. The general plan should identify possible locations for new schools. Such locations may be approximate and need not indicate specific parcels. Identifying appropriate school locations as part of the general plan process may avoid project-level problems of proximity to certain industrial facilities and uses. Due to the fragmentation of authority in the areas of land use planning and school siting and construction, it is recommended that the planning agency work closely with the school district to identify suitable school locations. Before adopting or amending a general plan, the planning agency must refer the proposed action to any school district within the area covered by the proposed action ([§65352](#)). The city or county should use this opportunity to engage school districts on issues of school siting.

School districts are required to notify the planning commission of the city or county before acquiring property for new schools or expansion of an existing school. School districts are not bound by local zoning ordinances unless the ordinance provides for the location of schools and the city or county has adopted a general plan ([§53091](#)). School districts can override the general plan and zoning ordinances with regard to the use of property for classroom facilities by a two-thirds vote of the school board ([§53094](#)). The school board cannot exercise this power for non-classroom facilities, such as administrative buildings, bus storage and maintenance yards, and warehouses. If the school board exercises their override power, they must notify the city or county within 10 days ([§53904](#)). At least 45 days prior to completion of a Master Plan or other plan relating to the

" Social equity factors, such as disparities in income, linguistic isolation, educational attainment and access to resources can greatly influence the ways populations experience a hazard. Understanding equity and engaging communities that will be most affected before, during and after a hazard event are steps toward building an adequate response to climate change. By helping to facilitate responses that are rooted in the needs of local communities and local challenges, climate change adaptation planning can become more effective. " ART paper

expansion of existing school site or acquisition of new sites, the school district governing board shall notify and provide relevant information to the city/county planning commission and meet with the city/county if requested. ([§65352.2](#))

Community Resilience

Community resilience refers to the ability of a community to respond, recover, and adapt, and do so dynamically. Akin to the circulation of traffic, if power is lost and a traffic light goes out, a bottleneck will occur, slowing traffic down. If the system is vulnerable- for example, if one street light stops working, and that ripples throughout the community with traffic jams – the system is not resilient.

When systems within a community are vulnerable, the effects can ripple throughout the area as well. “Vulnerability is the flip side of resilience: when a social or ecological system loses resilience it becomes vulnerable to change that previously could be absorbed.”^{xlix} Incorporating social equity is a key strategy for local governments to work toward sustainability and create resilient communities. Often, sustainability is discussed in terms of the “three E’s”- environment, economy, and equity.” Although it is one of the central pillars, social equity is often not integrated into planning to the full extent possible.ⁱ

General plan policies provide a unique opportunity to integrate planning priorities across agencies as well as align with other planning initiatives such as climate action planning and regional planning which is needed to incorporate many of the social equity considerations. It is vital to incorporate policies to support community resilience given the growing social, economic, and disaster risks. Some examples of climate action planning include water security planning, drought planning, wildfire planning and hazard mitigation plans.

The following section brings together some example strategies and policies from throughout the General Plan Guidelines and highlights how incorporating social equity considerations strengthens cities and counties as a whole.

Strategies

- Community Engagement
- Partnership with agencies and with community
- Mapping baseline conditions and indicators

OPR Recommended Policies

A full list of recommended policies can be found [here](#)

<i>Sample Policy</i>	<i>Example of Application</i>	<i>Relationship to Other Elements</i>
Attract and retain a diverse mix of businesses and industries that can provide jobs for residents of all skill and education levels to support a thriving community in [city, county]	San Jose	Land use, economic development, healthy communities
Provide a transparent process for public engagement of [city, county]’s diverse stakeholders.	San Jose	Land use, economic development
The [city, county] shall pursue and maximize the use of all appropriate state, federal, local and private funding for the development, preservation, and rehabilitation of housing affordable for extremely low-, very low-, low-, and moderate income households, while maintaining economic competitiveness in the region.	City of Sacramento	Land use, housing, economic development
Hold meetings and workshops at times and locations that are convenient for community members to attend, especially those that may be directly affected by a particular decision.	National City	Economic development

Chapter 7: Economic Development and the General Plan

Planning Healthy, Equitable, Resilient, and Economically Vibrant Communities with Opportunities for All

“World class communities come in all shapes and sizes, they are not determined by geography, and/or natural resources so much as by the mindset of their local leadership.”

— Don Allen Holbrook, *The Little Black Book of Economic Development*

Introduction

The resilience of a city’s or county’s economy both shapes and is shaped by its physical development. It strongly influences how a jurisdiction governs. Cities and counties may include a distinct economic development element, or highlight economic development as a primary theme or goal throughout their general plan. Most communities set forth goals of economic health and sustainable funding for public services for current and future residents, as part of support for a thriving business environment, job growth and retention, and, as appropriate, community revitalization.

Correlations Between Elements

	Land Use	Circulation	Housing	Conservation	Open Space	Noise	Safety
Economic Development	■	■	■	■	■		■

● Identified in statute ■ Closely related to statutory requirements

Economic Development and the General Plan

Decisions regarding [land use](#) and [circulation](#) can promote businesses and increase property values (Cervero 2002). Planning effective transportation access to centers of employment, education, and services can help a city or county build and maintain a strong economy. Ensuring an appropriate jobs housing balance provides residents with nearby employment choices. And fostering public health will have a direct effect on improvements in labor productivity and increased personal income (Merson 2012).

Businesses and Employment

Cities and counties can use general plan policies to promote business development and retention, job training and workforce development policies, partnerships with education institutions and private and non-profit organizations, incentives for targeted business investments, and marketing and communications programs. Connecting economic development with businesses and employment opportunities should be based around goals identified through community engagement, which should include targeted outreach to the business community. Involving potential employees, developers, and business leaders in the planning process early will help ensure policies grounded in community.

Economic development has a strong relationship to circulation. Resident and visitor access to employment centers and commercial centers is critical. Assessing and addressing the relationship between current and future accessibility through multiple modes, including transit and pedestrian and bicycle will provide employees and customers access to new and existing businesses and help support economic growth and vitality. Proximity to transit options increases property value as well as economic activity. Promoting connected systems of walkways, bikeways, and transit lines leading to economic centers provides easy, affordable access to retail, employment, and services. Including additional infrastructure around retail centers, such as bikeshare stations, pedestrian rest areas, and covered transit stops, may help economic stimulation.

Economic Development and Displacement

As cities and counties grow and prosper, consideration must be given to ensuring equitable development and opportunity for all community members. Whether low income or middle class, families across the country are feeling the financial strain brought on by higher rents and cost of living. While figures vary by geography and demographics, overall, low and middle income housing availability in California is shrinking. For every 100 extremely low income (ELI) renter households, there are just 31 affordable and available units (NLIHC).

Revitalizing communities, building strong city and county economies, embracing sustainable, coordinated development, and improving infrastructure are all positive policies with a wide range of benefits for their communities. A strong economy will produce a wide range of jobs with a wide range of salaries. An efficient economy will make the whole range of workers needed accessible to those jobs. HCD has created a set of [best practices](#) to combat displacement in planning and implementation. Additionally, numerous organizations and academics are working to identify potential tools for planners, advocates, and local governments. Some of these tools include

- [Community benefits funds](#)
- [Value Capture](#)
- [Inclusionary zoning](#)

Community Assets and Fiscal Stability

Community assets such as schools, parks, open space, universities, and cultural amenities, as well as infrastructure such as sidewalks, transit systems, and utilities, help create cities and counties that attract citizens and businesses. The creation, maintenance, and promotion of assets and infrastructure should be addressed throughout the general plan. Infrastructure and community assets must align with economic development goals, as they attract, retain, and support the workforce and commercial base that new and existing businesses require.

Revenue Share Agreements

At times, when potential development straddles geographic boundaries between jurisdictions, projects can be delayed or terminated due to conflict over revenue. Shared sales tax agreements, such as the one between the cities of [Oakland and Emeryville](#), can ensure each city or county receives a share of the benefits of economic growth.

Ultimately, businesses will invest in and support communities that offer a strong workforce, a stable fiscal climate, and policies to support their growth. General plans create an opportunity for cities and counties to implement policies that can spur economic development, revenue generation, and shared benefits for all community members.

Engagement with the Business Community

A strong general plan will benefit from outreach and input from all community members. It is especially important to engage business community members in any economic development plans, as their input and support is vital to its success. Direct outreach including visiting existing businesses, surveys, and small, targeted meetings, will help ensure engagement with the business community. Additionally, working with business organizations such as chambers of commerce, Business Improvement Districts, and Economic Development Corporations; partnering with service clubs such as Rotary or Kiwanis; and connecting with Colleges and Universities and Workforce Investment Boards will create a robust pool of information from community members invested in economic development. Such outreach could even lead to public private partnerships, shared benefit programs, or increased investment in the community.

SAMPLE OF OPR RECOMMENDED DATA FOR CONSIDERATION IN ANALYSIS OF THIS ELEMENT

Social and Economic Data	<i>Intent of analysis</i>	<i>Recommended Data</i>
	Inventory of current business establishments	Local lists, local chambers of commerce, or commercial sources such as InfoUSA.
	Inventory of current jobs by industry and business	See above
	Estimated wages by industry and occupation	Bureau of Labor Statistics Metropolitan Area Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates
	Cost of living data	City-data.com and other sources

	Population Characteristics	U.S. Census and City-data.com
	Workforce Characteristics	U.S. Census and City-data.com
	Housing Inventory	
	Transportation Current Flows	
	Transportation Planned	

OPR Recommended Policies

A full list of recommended policies can be found [here](#)

Policy	Example	Relation to other elements
[city, county] shall advance business assistance programs and resources to ensure the entire community benefits from economic development.		Social equity
[city, county] shall maintain and periodically update a strategic plan for economic development every [x] years, with near term goals and actions		Land use, circulation, social equity
[city, county] shall expand network of research tools to assist with identifying industry trends to include site selectors, interviews with businesses in target industries including [business types], brokers, investors, developers, and industry associations		Land use, social equity

[city, county] shall provide a land use mix that enhances economic development and job growth		Land use, circulation, conservation, social equity
[city, county] shall incorporate community benefits and value capture policies where appropriate for new development		Land use, circulation, conservation, open space, social equity
[city, county] shall stablish a list of "ready-to-go" or "shovel-ready" sites in consultation with property owners, and provide the list to interested developers and businesses seeking sites in the city.	Fresno	Land use, circulation

Chapter 8: Climate Change

Planning for Resiliency, Adaptation, and mitigation. Healthy, Equitable, Resilient, and Economically Vibrant Places

"Saving our planet, lifting people out of poverty, advancing economic growth...these are one and the same fight. We must connect the dots between climate change, water scarcity, [and] energy shortages,[and] food security. Solutions to one problem must be solutions for all"

--Ban Ki-moon

California, as it does in many areas, must show the way. We must demonstrate that reducing carbon is compatible with an abundant economy and human well-being. So far, we have been able to do that"

--Governor Jerry Brown

Introduction

While climate change is global, the effects are felt at the local level, and will continue to affect the ways cities and counties function in to the future. As the bodies that govern land use, cities and counties have the authority to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from new development, and to plan ahead to alleviate the worst effects of climate change. This chapter refers readers to resources and tools designed to help cities and counties address climate change effectively in their general plans. Throughout the General Plan Guidelines there are references to addressing GHG emissions reductions and climate change resilience and adaptation. The climate change chapter is meant to frame climate change as a priority to be addressed throughout the general plan and to provide a holistic view for how resources and tools should be used to support analysis of climate change. Other chapters are much more specific about how climate change should be addressed in the context of that element/chapter and should be referenced for guidance in that topic area.

The impacts of climate change pose an immediate and growing threat to California's economy, environment, and to public health. Cities and counties will continue to experience effects of climate change in various ways, including increased likelihood of droughts, flooding, wildfires, heatwaves and severe weather. Communities can explore the potential

impacts of climate change in distinct places through the Cal-Adapt tool at www.cal-adapt.org.

California communities can address these impacts in various ways. One is through adaptation and resilience policies. Another is to reduce the impacts of climate change through policies and programs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Throughout this section, reducing greenhouse gas emissions will be referred to as “GHG reductions” and taking measures to address the impacts of climate change will be referred to interchangeably as either “resilience” or “adaptation”. For more in depth definitions of GHG emissions and resilience refer to the California Air Resources Board “[AB32 Scoping Plan](#)” and the California Natural Resources Agency “[Safeguarding California Plan](#).”

The State of California addresses climate change through greenhouse gas emissions reduction, climate change resilience/readiness, and research in to the causes and effects of climate change. These “three R’s” of climate change policy can help support jurisdictions throughout the State understand, mitigate, and become more resilient to climate change. For more information on how the State of California is supporting these efforts please visit the State’s climate change portal: www.climatechange.ca.gov.

The tools and resources outlined in this chapter provide a basic set of resources for local governments to address climate change in general plans and related documents like climate action plans. Each jurisdiction is different, but these tools can be used to develop locally-appropriate climate policies. Planners should note that mitigation measures chosen should disproportionately affect low income communities. Some of the more useful climate change tools and resources referenced throughout this section and in other parts of the general plan guidelines include the following:

Process Guidance and Vulnerability/Impact Tools	Comprehensive free resource for reducing GHG emissions at the local level	California SEEC
	Guidelines for CEQA compliance	CEQA Guidelines
	Comprehensive framework for addressing adaptation at the local level	Adaptation Planning Guide
	Visualization tool for the impacts of climate change and links to resources	Cal-Adapt

	Federal resource for visualizing impacts, case studies, decision support	Climate Resilience Toolkit
Greenhouse Gas Emissions Tools	Links to various tools and case studies	Cool California
	Outlines the steps to reduce GHG emissions and includes templates	California SEEC
	Outlines examples of policies and programs to reduce GHG emissions	CAPCOA
	Provides state priorities, targets and the narrative regarding the importance of local planning on climate change	AB32 Scoping Plan
Climate Adaptation and Resilience	The definitive guide to developing adaptation policy at the local level in California	Adaptation Planning Guide
	The State’s approach to addressing climate impacts	Safeguarding California Plan
	The State’s framework (and local guidance) for climate hazards	State Hazard Mitigation Plan

Correlations Between Elements

	Land Use	Circulation	Housing	Conservation	Open Space	Noise	Safety
Climate Change	■	■	■	■	■		●

● Identified in statute ■ Closely related to statutory requirements

Climate Adaptation Planning

Extreme weather events are expected to intensify in the coming decades due to climate change. Emergency managers, planning g agencies, private companies, and communities affected by climate change will need to plan for the increase in the type, extent, and

intensity of natural hazards. A jurisdiction can start the process of understanding local impacts by using the resources in [Cal-Adapt](#), the State's visualization tool for climate impacts. Cal-Adapt can be used in conjunction with California's climate change resilience decision support tool called the [Adaptation Planning Guide](#).

In addition to individual action, many local governments are choosing to create or join collaborative partnerships that address climate adaptation at a multijurisdictional level. The Alliance of Regional Collaboratives for Climate Adaptation (ARRCA) (see www.arccacalifornia.org) was developed in 2012 to help prepare California's urban centers for the potential extreme events such as flooding, heat waves, and fires and can be a coordination point for policy and program initiatives related to climate change impacts.

California Climate Adaptation Planning Guide (APG)

The [California Climate Adaptation Planning Guide \(APG\)](#) provides guidance for addressing the unavoidable consequences of climate change. The APG introduces the reason for climate change adaptation planning and details a step-by-step process for local and regional climate vulnerability assessment and adaptation strategy development. The APG was developed to allow flexibility in the commitment of time, money, and scope.

The APG consists of the following four documents:

APG: Planning for Adaptive Communities – This document presents the reason for climate change adaptation planning and introduces a step-by-step process for local and regional climate vulnerability assessment and adaptation strategy development. All communities should start with this document.

APG: Defining Local and Regional Impacts – This supplemental document provides a more in-depth understanding of how climate change can affect a community. Seven "impact sectors" are included to support communities conducting a climate vulnerability assessment.

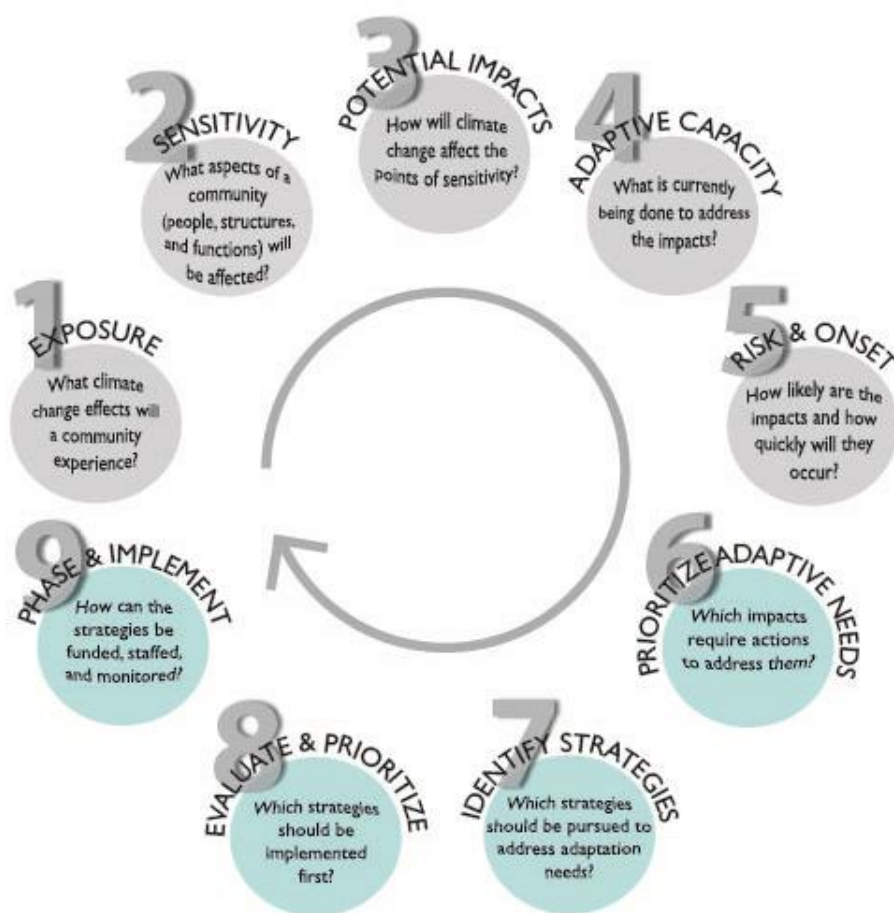
APG: Understanding Regional Characteristics – The impact of climate change varies across the state. This supplemental document identifies climate impact regions, including their environmental and socioeconomic characteristics.

APG: Identifying Adaptation Strategies – This supplemental document explores potential adaptation strategies that communities can use. Adaptation strategies are categorized into the same impact sectors used in the APG: Defining Local and Regional Impacts document.

Steps in Climate Adaptation Strategy Development

Developing climate change adaptation strategies can take different approaches; however, the basic steps are described below (see Figure 4.A).

Figure 6: The Nine Steps in Adaptation Strategy Development as outlined in the Adaptation Planning Guide



Source: California APG: Defining Local and Regional Impacts

The steps outlined above are part of the vulnerability assessment (Steps 1-5) and adaptation strategy development (Steps 6-9). For more information on each of these steps and details

about how to proceed through vulnerability and adaptation planning please refer to the [Adaptation Planning Guide](#).

Climate change adaptation and resilience should be integrated throughout the elements of a general plan. It should also provide context for changes in the environmental setting that will occur over time.

Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

While responding to the impacts resulting from climate change may be the primary reason to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, co-benefits from reduction strategies may result in better health outcomes, lower energy costs, improved access to transportation options, recreational opportunities and general resource efficiency.

The AB32 Scoping Plan located on the [California Air Resources Board website](#) and the related [Cool California](#) website are good places to start reviewing context and guidance for jurisdictions developing climate action plans and greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. The [AB32 Scoping Plan](#) includes a section on local and regional leadership that provides examples and case studies of successful local initiatives on climate. The [California State Energy Efficiency Collaborative \(SEEC\)](#) also provides free tools and resources for developing a climate change program.

Figure 4b, The Five Milestone Process for Developing a Greenhouse Gas Reduction Program



Source: www.californiaseec.org

Local governments play a critical role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In California local governments regulate many activities that contribute to GHGs and air pollutants, including industrial permitting, land use and transportation planning, zoning and urban growth decisions, implementation of building codes and other standards, and control of municipal operations.

For example, local and regional actions have a significant influence on vehicle miles traveled (VMT). ARB regulates vehicle fuel efficiency and the carbon intensity of fuel, but VMT is impacted by land use decisions and continues to increase in California. Regional and local governments and agencies influence VMT-related GHG emissions both on a project-level basis and in integrated, long-term blueprints such as the Sustainable Communities Strategies (SCS) and regional transportation plans. In addition, local land use decisions can promote climate-friendly policies such as transit-oriented and mixed-use development that can also create consistency with the region's SCS, if applicable.

Building and energy efficiency actions present another general plan opportunity for local GHG emission reduction action. Nearly 70 percent of all single family homes in California were built before the adoption of California's [Building Energy Efficiency Standards](#). Many local governments have already adopted energy efficiency standards for existing buildings that exceed Title 24. In addition, some local governments have adopted time-of-sale ordinances requiring energy efficiency upgrades exceeding Title 24 upon a change of title. There are numerous other resources embedded in [SEEC's](#) tools and located on www.coolcalifornia.org that can help local governments calculate emissions, understand impacts to the community and plan to reduce emissions and risk associated with a changing climate.

CHAPTER 9: Preparing, Integrating, and Implementing the General Plan

Introduction

All statutory references are to the California Government Code unless otherwise noted

The implementation of a general plan is particularly important to consider even before the general plan update process is started. Determining how goals, policies and actions may work in practice can help define how best to approach the general plan update and content. Additionally, with the proliferation of regional planning initiatives, grant programs promoting particular policies, and focused and related companion documents such as climate action plans, the general plan serves the function of integrating and synthesizing the various interrelated documents and programs that make a community function effectively.

A general plan is ineffective if it is not well implemented. General implementation relies on specific plans, zoning ordinances, subdivision ordinances, and public project consistency requirements, among other mechanisms. State law requires cities and counties to have subdivision regulations, and building regulations, and open-space zoning, while many of the other measures described in this chapter are adopted at the discretion of the city or county. If the objectives, policies, and proposals of the general plan are to be implemented effectively, implementing measures must be carefully chosen, reflective of local needs, and carried out as an integrated program of complementary and mutually reinforcing actions.

It is important to remember that implementation measures identified in the general plan (and the mitigation measures identified in its EIR) must be fiscally constrained and feasible to implement in order to be vertically consistent and legally defensible. Cities and counties are advised to collaborate proactively with their regional public and private sector partners in order to develop and adopt multi-party fair share impact fee programs needed to finance planned infrastructure improvements. Transportation components of the improvements should base such impact fee programs on multi-modal system improvements with a demonstrated ability to reduce the VMT generated by new development.

ZONING

Zoning is one of the primary means of implementing a general plan. In contrast to the long-term outlook of the general plan, zoning classifies the specific, immediate uses of land. The success of a general plan, and in particular the land use element, rests in part upon the effectiveness of a consistent zoning ordinance in translating the long-term objectives and policies contained in the plan into everyday decisions.

The typical zoning ordinance regulates land use by dividing the community into districts or “zones” and specifying the uses that are to be permitted, conditionally permitted, and prohibited within each zone. Text and map(s) describe the distribution and intensity of land uses in such categories as residential, commercial, industrial, and open space. Trade-offs and considerations related to sustainable development, [infill](#), and [equity](#) should be considered when designating zoning maps. Written regulations establish procedures for considering projects, standards for minimum lot size, building height and setback limits, fence heights, parking, and other development parameters within each land use zone. Form based codes (FBC’s) have also emerged as a resource for planning the “feel” of a community. FBCs are typically accomplished through overlays on a base zoning designation but can also be stand alone. More information on FBCs can be found [here](#).

In counties, general law cities, and charter cities with a population of more than two million, zoning provisions must be consistent with the general plan ([§65860](#)). Charter cities with a population of under two million are exempt from the zoning consistency requirement unless their charters provide otherwise, however, these charter cities should see consistency between the general plan and zoning. An in-depth discussion of zoning consistency can be found later in this chapter under the heading “Consistency in Implementation.”

Zoning Tools

The following are some common examples of zoning provisions that can be used to further general plan objectives and policies.

- **Cluster zoning:** A district that allows the clustering of structures upon a given site in the interest of preserving open space. Cluster zones typically have a low standard for gross residential density and a high minimum open-space requirement to encourage the clustering of structures.
- **Conditional use permit (CUP):** A discretionary permit that enables a city or county to consider, on an individual basis, specific land uses that might otherwise have undesirable effects upon an area and to approve such uses when conditions can be placed on them that would avoid those effects.
- **Design review:** Required review of project design and/or architectural features for the purpose of ensuring compatibility with established standards. It is often used in historic districts or areas that have a distinct character worthy of protection. Design review is a means of enforcing aesthetic standards.
- **Floating zone:** A district described in the zoning ordinance but not given a specific location on the zoning maps until a property owner or developer applies for it. Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning is a common example of a floating zone. Floating zones can implement development standards established in the general plan.
- **Floodplain zone:** A district that restricts development within delineated floodplains in order to avoid placing people and structures in harm's way and obstructing flood flows. The zone may allow for agricultural, open-space or similar low-intensity uses.
- **Hillside development ordinance:** Provisions regulating development on steep slopes, often by establishing a direct relationship between the degree of slope and minimum lot size. This can implement specific policies and standards that may be found in the land use, open-space, and safety elements.
- **Mixed-use zoning:** An ordinance provision that authorizes several land uses to be combined in a single structure, area or project. It is being widely used in a variety of communities from urban to rural in nature. It is often used for office/commercial/high-density residential projects, such as San Francisco's Embarcadero Center, and increasingly for urban projects that combine ground floor retail/commercial with residential units above.
- **Open-space zoning:** [Government Code Section 65910](#) specifically requires the adoption of open-space zoning to implement the open-space element. Similarly, the Timberland

Productivity Act ([§51100](#), et seq.) requires local governments with qualifying timberlands to adopt Timberland Productivity Zoning (TPZ) for qualifying timberlands.

- **Overlay zone:** Additional regulations superimposed upon existing zoning in specified areas. Subsequent development must comply with the requirements of both the overlay zone and the base district. Historic districts, airport height restrictions, and floodplain regulations are commonly established by overlay zones.
- **Planned unit development (PUD) zoning:** A type of floating zone designed to provide flexibility in project design and standards. It is usually characterized by comprehensive site planning, clustering of structures, and a mixture of land uses. A PUD can implement specific density, open-space, community design, and hazard mitigation standards contained in the general plan.
- **Specific plan zone:** A district that mandates the preparation of a specific plan prior to development. The specific plan establishes zoning regulations tailored to that site, consistent with the general plan.
- **Transfer of development rights (TDR):** A device by which the development potential of a site is severed from its title and made available for transfer to another location. The owner of a site within a transfer area retains property ownership but not approval to develop. The owner of a site within a receiving area may purchase transferable development credits, allowing a receptor site to be developed at a greater density. The California Coastal Commission has used this technique to “retire” antiquated subdivision lots in environmentally sensitive areas.
- **Tree preservation ordinance:** Regulations that limit the removal of specified types of trees and require replacement of trees that are removed.

Zoning-Related Statutes

Although local governments have broad discretion in zoning matters, there are a number of state-mandated zoning requirements that directly relate to the general plan. The following summarizes most of the requirements that apply to general law cities, charter cities with a population above two million, and counties:

- **Surplus school sites:** School districts may request the rezoning of certain surplus school sites ([§65852.9](#)). The city or county must then zone the site consistently with the general plan. The local government may not rezone surplus school sites to open-space, recreational, or park uses unless surrounding lands are similarly zoned or the school district agrees to the rezoning.
- **Prezoning:** [Government Code Section 65859](#) allows a city to prezone adjacent unincorporated territory. The prezoning action is subject to the requirements applicable to zoning in the city, including the requirement for consistency with the general plan. Prezoning has no regulatory effect until the property is annexed to the city. Local agency formation commission (LAFCO) law requires prezoning as part of the annexation process.
- **Interim ordinance:** Cities and counties may enact interim ordinances prohibiting uses that may conflict with a contemplated general plan, specific plan, or zoning proposal (§65858). Interim zoning may be imposed for an initial period of 45 days and extended for up to two years. It can be used effectively when the general plan is being revised or when major rezonings are being undertaken in order to achieve general plan consistency. Local governments should exercise caution when imposing land use controls or moratoriums, even if they are only temporary. Excessive restrictions may constitute a regulatory taking entitling affected landowners to just compensation and may be considered a constraint, warranting revision to the housing element. City and county officials should consult with their legal counsel to determine what degree of development control is reasonable.
- **Regional housing needs:** Local governments must consider the effects of proposed ordinances on regional housing needs and balance them against the availability of public services, fiscal resources, and environmentally suitable sites. A zoning ordinance limiting the number of new housing units must contain findings regarding the public health, safety, and welfare that justify reducing regional housing opportunities (§65863.6). Pursuant to §65913.1, the local government must zone a sufficient amount of vacant land for residential use to maintain a balance with land zoned for nonresidential use and to meet the community's housing needs as projected in the housing element. In addition, §65863 restricts the ability of a city or county to reduce, through administrative, quasi-judicial, or legislative action, the residential density of any parcel to a density lower than

that used by the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) in determining compliance with housing element law.

- **Housing development projects:** Government Code Section [65589.5](#) restricts cities and counties from disapproving housing development project affordable to very low-, low- or moderate-income households except under certain circumstances. These circumstances include inconsistency with the general plan, specific unavoidable impacts on the public health and safety, and overconcentration of low-income households, among others. This code section further restricts the ability of cities and counties to disapprove or lower the density of a housing development project that is consistent with general plan and zoning standards unless there is an impact on the public health and safety that cannot otherwise be mitigated.
- **Density bonus:** Local governments must provide incentives to developers of specified housing developments. A density bonus and at least one other regulatory incentive must be provided when a developer pledges to set aside specific percentages of the total amount of housing for low- or very low-income residents, seniors, or—for condominium projects only—moderate-income residents ([§65915](#)). In return, the developer must reserve these units for this purpose for a certain number of years. Incentives may include a reduction in site development standards or approval of mixed-use zoning. A density bonus must exceed the maximum allowable general plan or zoning density by at least 25 percent.
- **Second units:** Local governments may, by ordinance, provide for the creation of second residential units in single family and multifamily zoning districts ([§65852.2](#)). The ordinance may designate areas where second units are permitted, based on specified criteria, as well as impose certain zoning and design conditions. Second unit applications must be considered ministerially without discretionary review. A local government cannot adopt an ordinance totally precluding second units unless it makes certain findings. In the absence of any local ordinance, state law provides for the approval of second units that meet the required standards.

SPECIFIC PLANS

A specific plan is a great tool for systematically implementing the general plan within all or a portion of the planning area ([§65450](#), et seq.). Any interested party may request the adoption, amendment, or repeal of a specific plan. A plan may be prepared by either the public or private sector, however, responsibility for its adoption, amendment, and repeal lies with the city council or county board of supervisors. As a legislative act, a specific plan can also be adopted by voter initiative and is subject to referendum.

At a minimum, a specific plan must include a statement of its relationship to the general plan ([§65451\(b\)](#)) and text and diagram(s) specifying all of the following in detail:

- The distribution, location, and extent of the uses of land, including open space, within the area covered by the plan.
- The proposed distribution, location, extent, and intensity of major components of public and private transportation, sewage, water, drainage, solid waste disposal, energy, and other essential facilities proposed to be located within the area covered by the plan and needed to support the land uses described in the plan.
- Standards and criteria by which development will proceed and standards for the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources, where applicable.
- A program of implementation measures, including regulations, programs, public works projects, and financing measures necessary to carry out the provisions of the preceding three paragraphs ([§65451\(a\)](#)).
- Any other subjects that, in the judgment of the planning agency, are necessary or desirable for general plan implementation ([§65452](#)).

A specific plan is especially useful for large projects, as well as for sites with environmental and fiscal constraints. A specific plan may be adopted by resolution (like a general plan) or ordinance (like a zoning ordinance). Some jurisdictions have chosen to adopt the policy portions of their specific plans by resolution and the regulatory portions by ordinance. This enables a city or county to assemble, in one package, a set of land use specifications and implementation programs tailored to the unique characteristics of a particular site.

A regulatory specific plan often has advantages over zoning. A community's control of development phasing provides a good example. The regulatory effects of zoning are immediate, while the provisions of a general plan are long term. If a general plan's implementation is limited to zoning, phasing a long-term development so that it meets the general plan's objectives can be difficult. The one-time adoption of a specific plan that stipulates development timing or schedules infrastructure installation can solve the problem.

Statutory provisions allow streamlined permitting once a specific plan is in place. For example, residential development projects are exempt from CEQA if they implement and are consistent with a specific plan for which an EIR or supplemental EIR has been prepared ([§65457](#)).

A specific plan can reduce development costs. For example, the specific plan's land use specifications, in combination with its capital improvements program, can eliminate uncertainties as to future utility capacities and help avoid costly oversizing.

A specific plan must be consistent with the jurisdiction's general plan ([§65454](#)). In turn, zoning ordinances, subdivisions (including tentative tract and parcel maps), public works projects, development agreements, and land projects (as defined in [Business and Professions Code §11004.5](#)) must be consistent with any applicable specific plan ([§65455](#), [§66473.5](#), [§66474\(a\)](#), [§66474.5\(b\)](#), [§66474.61\(a\)](#), and [§65867.5](#)). Furthermore, a special district, school district, or joint powers authority may not carry out its capital improvements program, which can include school district bond plans, master plans, and other documents (prepared pursuant to [§65403](#)) if the affected city or county finds the program or any part inconsistent with a specific plan. The district or local agency may carry out an inconsistent project only if it explicitly overrules the city's or county's finding ([§65403\(c\)](#)).

A specific plan is prepared, adopted, and amended in the same manner as a general plan, except that it may be adopted by resolution or ordinance and it may be amended as often as the local legislature deems necessary ([§65453\(a\)](#)). A specific plan is repealed in the same manner as it is amended ([§65453\(b\)](#)). To defray the cost of specific plan preparation, a city or county may impose a fee upon persons whose projects must be consistent with the plan. The fee must be prorated according to the benefit a person receives from the specific plan ([§65456](#)).

For more information about specific plans, see OPR's publication [*The Planner's Guide to Specific Plans*](#).

SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

Land cannot be subdivided for sale, lease, or financing in California without local government approval. The Subdivision Map Act ([§66410](#), et seq.) establishes statewide uniformity in local subdivision procedures while giving cities and counties the authority to regulate the design and improvement of subdivisions, require dedications of public improvements or related impact fees, and require compliance with the objectives and policies of the general plan. This includes the authority to approve and design street alignments, street grades and widths, drainage and sanitary facilities, lot size and configuration, traffic access, and other measures "as may be necessary or convenient to insure consistency with, or implementation of, the general plan or any applicable specific plan" ([§66418 and §66419](#)).

These regulatory powers can promote the usual array of land use, circulation, open-space, and safety element objectives, policies, and plan proposals. Good subdivision design can encourage pedestrian access, residential street calming, urban forestry, tree preservation, floodplain management, wildland fire safety, and other principles or policies that may be articulated in the general plan.

Subdivisions provide infrastructure that will serve the new lots being created. Local governments can require dedications of public improvements or the payment of in-lieu fees for:

- Streets, alleys, drainage, public utility easements, and public easements. ([§66475](#))
- Local transit facilities, such as bus turnouts, benches, shelters, and landing pads. ([§66475.2](#))
- Bicycle paths. ([§66475.1](#))
- Parks and recreational facilities, if the city's general plan or specific plan contains policies and standards for such facilities. ([Quimby Act, §66477](#))
- School sites (this is actually a reservation with a right to purchase at a later date). ([§66478](#))

- Access to waterways, rivers, and streams. ([§66478.11](#))
- Access to coastline or shoreline. ([§66478.11](#))
- Access to public lakes and reservoirs. ([§66478.12](#))
- Drainage and sanitary sewer facilities. ([§66483](#))
- Bridges and major thoroughfares. ([§66484](#))

No tentative subdivision map or parcel map can be approved unless the city or county finds that the subdivision, together with design and improvement provisions, is consistent with all aspects of the general plan or any applicable specific plan [§66473.5](#), [§66474](#), and [§66474.61](#)) Lot line adjustments must also be consistent with the general plan ([§66412](#)). The local government must deny a proposed subdivision if it finds that the proposed subdivision map is inconsistent with the general plan or any applicable specific plan; the design or improvement of the subdivision is inconsistent with the general plan or any applicable specific plan; the site is physically ill-suited for either the type or proposed density of development; or the subdivision's design or types of improvements are likely to cause substantial environmental damage, substantially and avoidably injure fish or wildlife or their habitat, or cause public health problems. Cities and counties must make written findings of fact supported by substantial evidence for each of these matters when deciding upon a subdivision.

The special rules applicable to vesting tentative maps are worth noting, as detailed in [§66498.1](#), et seq. When subdividers receive city or county approval of a vesting tentative map, they also obtain a limited right to develop the subdivision in substantial compliance with those ordinances, policies, and standards ([§66498.1\(b\)](#)) in effect at the time the application was deemed complete (*Kaufman and Broad v. City of Modesto (1994) 25 Cal.App.4th 1577*). If, however, a local agency has initiated formal proceedings to amend applicable plans or regulations prior to the application being deemed complete, the amendments, if adopted, will apply to the vesting map. The local agency may condition or deny building permits for parcels created under a vesting tentative map if the agency determines that a failure to do so would threaten community health or safety or the condition or denial is required by state or federal law. The vesting tentative map law applies to all subdivisions, including commercial and industrial tracts

CAPITAL FACILITIES

Capital facilities must be consistent with the general plan (*Friends of B Street v. City of Hayward* (1980) 106 Cal.App.3d 988). The network of publicly owned facilities, such as streets, water and sewer facilities, public buildings, and parks, forms the framework of a community. Although capital facilities are built to accommodate present and anticipated needs, some (most notably water and sewer facilities and roads) play a major role in determining the location, intensity, and timing of development. For instance, the availability of sewer and water connections can have a profound impact upon the feasibility of preserving agricultural or open-space lands.

The general plan should identify existing capital facilities and the need for additional improvements. The [circulation element](#) is the most obvious place to address infrastructure issues, but it is not the only element where capital improvements come into play. For example:

- The [housing element](#) must identify adequate sites for various housing types based in part on public services and facilities. Water and sewer providers are required to adopt a procedure to grant priority to development with units affordable to lower income households.
- The [safety element](#) must "address evacuation routes, peakload water supply requirements, and minimum road widths...as those items relate to fire and geologic hazards" (§65302(g)).
- The [land use element](#) must include education-related land uses such as school sites, open-space for recreation, public buildings and grounds (the placement of public buildings may play an important role in urban design), and solid and liquid waste disposal facilities.
- The [open-space element](#) may consider "open-space for outdoor recreation...areas particularly suited for park and recreation purposes" (§65560(b)(3)). It may also address open-space areas for protecting water quality and for water reservoirs.
- The [conservation element](#) can address flood control measures and is required to be developed in coordination with any countywide water agency and with all district and city agencies that have "developed, served, controlled or conserved water for any purpose for the county or city for which the plan is prepared" (§65302(b)).

Local governments can underscore their interest in public services and facilities by adopting an optional public facilities element.

Each year, the local planning agency is required to “review the capital improvement program of the city or county and the local public works projects of other local agencies for consistency with their general plan” ([§65103\(c\)](#)). To fulfill this requirement, all departments within the city or county and all other local governmental agencies (including cities, counties, school districts, and special districts) that construct capital facilities must submit a list of proposed projects to the planning agency ([§65401](#)).

In lieu of considering individual projects or only those projects to be undertaken in a single year, many cities and counties prepare and annually revise a 5- to 7-year capital improvement program (CIP). The CIP projects annual expenditures for acquisition, construction, maintenance, rehabilitation, and replacement of public buildings and facilities, including sewer, water, and street improvements; street lights; traffic signals; parks; and police and fire facilities. In rapidly developing areas, a CIP coordinated with a general plan can help shape and time growth according to adopted policies. In an older city with a declining tax base and deteriorating capital facilities, a CIP can help stimulate private investment or stabilize and rehabilitate older neighborhoods by demonstrating a public commitment to the provision of key public facilities on a predetermined schedule.

Many federal grant programs, including those under the Clean Air Act and the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) require or promote consistency between federally assisted capital projects and local, regional, and state plans. For example, the Clean Air Act requires that the population projections used in planning capital facilities conform to the assumptions contained in the regional air quality management plan adopted as part of the State Implementation Plan (SIP) when federal funding or approval is sought. The federal government gives priority to implementing those programs that conform to the SIP and will not fund those that do not.

Capital improvements also have regional implications. The growing interrelatedness of planning issues among local governments applies directly to local capital improvement projects. The location of major roads, sewer facilities, water trunk lines, and emergency service buildings within the city or county can affect surrounding communities by encouraging or deflecting the direction of growth. Although the LAFCO exists to encourage

the orderly provision of services within cities and special districts, it is seldom an effective substitute for every city and the county consulting and cooperating with its neighbors.

DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENTS

A development agreement is a contractual agreement between a city or county and a developer that identifies vested rights that apply to a specific development project. By its nature, it offers opportunities for a city or county to assure that general plan objectives, policies, and plan proposals will be implemented as development occurs within an area.

A development agreement provides that, for a specified time period, the rules, regulations, and policies that are applicable to a particular development will not change. This gives developers who have otherwise yet to attain a vested right to develop a degree of assurance that their project preparations will not be nullified by some future local policy or regulation change (e.g., the rezoning of a commercial project site to residential), with limited exceptions. In exchange for the privilege of a regulation “freeze,” the city or county usually will obtain certain concessions from the developer. For example, the developer might provide extra affordable housing, open space, or public facilities.

Development agreements must specify the duration of the agreement, the permitted uses of property, the density or intensity of use, the maximum height and size of proposed buildings, and the provisions for reservation or dedication of land for public purposes ([§65865.2](#)). In addition, development agreements may include the conditions, terms, restrictions, and requirements for subsequent discretionary actions; provide that such stipulations shall not prevent development of the land with regard to the uses, densities, and intensities set forth in the agreement; specify the timing of project construction or completion; and set forth the terms and conditions relating to applicant financing of necessary public facilities and subsequent reimbursement over time.

One advantage of development agreements is that the developer may be asked to obligate the project to improvements that exceed the usual legal limits on exactions. The limits do not apply when the developer has voluntarily entered into a contract with the city or county. A disadvantage of development agreements is that a city or county may be unable to

respond to a changing market or apply new regulations to a project that is controlled by a long-term development agreement.

A city can enter into a development agreement covering unincorporated territory that is within its sphere of influence. This allows for planning in advance of an annexation. Such an agreement is not operative unless annexation proceedings are completed within the period of time specified by the agreement ([§65865](#)). If territory covered by a county development agreement becomes part of a newly incorporated city or is annexed to a city, the agreement is valid for its original duration or eight years from the date of incorporation, whichever is earlier.

It is important to stipulate the existing rules, regulations, and policies that will be subject to a development agreement. In the absence of such specification, all development rules, regulations, and official policies noted in [§65866](#) that are in force upon the execution of a development agreement will be frozen. This could result in unanticipated consequences for both a developer and a city or county. A detailed specific plan prepared and adopted prior to a development agreement is one way to specify development details for a site, including the regulations and policies that would apply under the development agreement. Specific plan preparation can also facilitate further citizen participation in planning a development.

BUILDING AND HOUSING CODES

The enforcement of state building standards and housing codes are delegated by State Housing Law to the local building department. Codes and standards are intended to encourage uniformity and establish minimum standards to protect the health, safety and general welfare of the public and occupants of residential buildings statewide. Local land use, housing elements, and additional health or safety elements are established by local ordinances. Building and housing codes have their greatest effect on new construction and rehabilitation, but certain parts of the codes apply to the use, maintenance, change in occupancy, and public health and safety hazards of existing buildings.

State housing law ([Health and Safety Code §17910](#), et seq.) requires cities and counties to enforce state building standards and other regulations adopted by the Department of

Housing and Community Development. Local ordinances may modify state building standards to impose substantially the same requirements as those contained in the various industry codes: the Uniform Housing Code, the International Building Code, The International Residential Code, The International Existing Building Code, the Uniform Plumbing Code, the National Electrical Code, and the Uniform Mechanical Code. Local government may amend state building standards that are reasonably necessary based upon local climatic, geological, or topographical conditions.. The State housing law applies to buildings such as apartments, hotels, motels, lodging houses, manufactured housing, and dwellings but not to mobilehomes. In addition to meeting the requirements of state housing law, local codes must also comply with other state requirements related fire safety, noise insulation, soils reports, earthquake protection, energy insulation, and access for the disabled.

State law allows a city or county, when adopting the California Building Standards Code, to make such changes "as it determines ... are reasonably necessary because of local climatic, geological or topographical conditions" ([Health and Safety Code §17958.5](#)). Further, the local building department can authorize the use of materials and construction methods other than those specified in the California Building Standards Code where the department finds the proposed design satisfactory and the materials or methods at least equivalent to those prescribed by the California Building Standards Code with regard to performance, safety, and the protection of life and health ([Health and Safety Code §17951](#)). These provisions can be used to promote the construction of affordable housing and the rehabilitation of substandard housing.

Other provisions are particularly useful where a community intends to encourage historic preservation. Health and Safety Code [§17958.8](#) allows the use of original materials and construction methods in existing buildings. [Health and Safety Code §17980\(c\)\(2\)](#) requires local enforcement agencies to consider needs expressed in the housing element when deciding whether to require abandonment or repair of a substandard dwelling. In the reconstruction of existing buildings that would be hazardous in the event of an earthquake, the law allows cities and counties to use building standards that provide for the protection of the occupants but that are less rigorous in other respects than current building standards ([Health and Safety Code §19160, et seq.](#)).

Code enforcement and abatement procedures are another means of implementing the general plan, particularly the housing and safety elements. Various state laws and regulations spell out abatement procedures that local government may enforce upon buildings that, because they are substandard or unsafe, constitute a public nuisance. The most common procedures involve citation and misdemeanor action on the part of the city or county to mandate abatement by repair, abandonment, or demolition.

ACQUISITION

City and county acquisition of real property rights can help to implement the plan proposals of the land use, circulation and open-space elements. In implementing the land use element, cities and counties may acquire land designated for government offices, police and fire stations, parks, access easements, etc., or for public purposes such as urban redevelopment. With regard to the circulation element, local governments may acquire land for public rights-of-way (e.g., streets, sidewalks, bicycle paths, etc.), transit terminals, airports, etc. Cities and counties may advance open-space element policies and proposals through the acquisition of open-space and conservation easements.

Open-space acquisition has some advantages over purely regulatory approaches to implementation, such as zoning. Ownership ensures that the land will be controlled by either the city or county or another public agency. Acquiring an open-space or conservation easement rather than full ownership ensures that development will be limited, while the private landowner who continues to hold the underlying rights is compensated for lost development opportunities. This avoids the question of whether regulatory limitations have unconstitutionally “taken” private property without just compensation.

The primary disadvantage to acquisition is its cost. Land often is expensive, particularly when urbanization is imminent or where the supply of potentially developable land is limited. Funding sources, such as taxes and assessments, are limited in this post-Proposition 13 and post-Proposition 218 environment. A successful acquisition program often involves the resourceful blending of several funding sources.

Acquisition can take various forms. An overall program can be tied to general plan consistency or a capital improvements program. A city or county, in consultation with its legal counsel, may wish to consider the following:

- **Fee simple absolute interests:** A fee simple absolute estate in land consists of all the real property interests associated with the land, including the rights to sell, lease, and develop the property. Consequently, fee simple absolute ownership entitles a city or county to develop or not develop the land as it chooses.
- **Easement interests:** An easement consists of a portion of the rights to real property, such as the right to travel over the property or the right to build structures. The seller retains all property rights not stipulated in the easement. Travelways, utilities and open space are some common uses of easements.
- **Leasing:** The lessee possesses and occupies leased real property for a determinable time period, although the landlord retains full ownership. A city or county may lease land from a property owner for access purposes, open-space preservation, etc.
- **Lease-purchase agreements:** Real property may be leased by a city or county and rental payments may be put toward purchasing the property. If a local jurisdiction does not have enough capital to buy the land outright, the lease-purchase method can spread payments over time.
- **Purchase and resale or lease:** Once a city or county has purchased a parcel of land or the parcel's development rights, the jurisdiction may assist in the development of housing affordable to lower income households and preserve open space (or otherwise control land use) by selling the land or the development rights with deed restrictions specifying permitted land uses. A local jurisdiction may also lease property subject to a rental contract specifying permitted uses. These techniques enable the jurisdiction to recover at least a portion of its purchasing expenses.
- **Joint acquisition:** Two or more local governments may combine their funding resources to acquire joint ownership of real property rights. Joint acquisition allows local governments to share the financial burden of purchasing land.
- **Land swapping:** Local governments may exchange some of their land for parcels owned by private landowners or other jurisdictions in order to obtain desirable open space, park sites, etc.

- **Eminent domain:** Eminent domain involves the compensated taking of property for a public use or purpose, such as the acquisition of open space for a city greenbelt. This may include fee simple interest and less-than-fee interests such as easements. An owner whose property is taken is entitled to receive just compensation through the payment of fair market value for the loss (California Constitution, Article I, §19). Cities and counties are authorized to exercise the power of eminent domain ([§25350.5](#) for counties and [§37350.5](#) for cities) in accordance with eminent domain law ([Code of Civil Procedure, §1230.010 to §1230.020](#)).

PREFERENTIAL PROPERTY TAX ASSESSMENTS

Preferential assessment programs provide landowners an economic incentive to keep their land in agricultural, timber, open-space, or recreational use. This can help implement the land use, open-space, and conservation elements by protecting areas designated for such uses from premature development. State law provides local governments with several preferential assessment programs, the most common of which are discussed below.

Williamson Act

The Legislature enacted the California Land Conservation Act ([§51200](#), et seq.) in response to the rapid loss of agricultural land in areas of increasing land values. Typically, as development approaches an agricultural area, the price of land is driven upward by owners and buyers speculating on the future development potential of the land. The increase in prices leads to a corresponding increase in the assessed value of the land and to the owner's property taxes. At some point, the increased tax burden makes it uneconomical to continue farming and encourages the sale of the land for development.

The Williamson Act allows counties and cities to establish agricultural preserves and to assess agricultural and open-space land on the basis of its agricultural, rather than market, value. Owners of qualified land located in an agricultural preserve contract with the county

or city to continue agricultural or compatible activities for a period of at least ten years. The state annually reimburses the local agency for a portion of its resultant tax losses.

A Williamson Act contract automatically renews itself each year. Termination of the contract may be accomplished by one of three methods. The landowner or local government can file a notice of "nonrenewal." The notice halts the yearly contract renewal, resulting in its expiration at the end of ten years. Alternatively, a local government may immediately cancel a contract after making certain strict findings. Such a cancellation requires the owner to pay penalty fees. A contract may be rescinded without penalty when the city or county has entered into an agreement with the landowner to simultaneously place an equal or greater amount of equally suitable agricultural land into an agricultural conservation easement ([§51256](#)). The value of the proposed conservation easement must be at least 12.5 percent of the land subject to contract rescission and other restrictions apply. Nonrenewal is intended to be the normal route for ending a Williamson Act contract. Cancellation is meant to be reserved for special circumstances ([Lewis v. City of Hayward \(1986\) 177 Cal.App.3d 103](#)) and rescission is intended to provide more flexibility.

Williamson Act contracts are voluntary, which is both their greatest strength and weakness. On the positive side, voluntary contracts lessen the potential for litigation over the uncompensated taking of land that is sometimes alleged when land uses are restricted. Also, because the owner is directly involved in entering the program, responsibility is imparted to the landowner for ensuring that the program works. On the other hand, the potential profits anticipated from future development on the urban fringe may outweigh the tax advantages of the contract. Thus, in the very areas where it could be most effective in preventing the premature conversion of farmland, there are strong economic incentives not to join the program.

In 1998, in response to the perceived weaknesses of the Williamson Act program, the Legislature added additional nonregulatory protection in the form of farmland security zones for specific classifications of farmland, including prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, unique farmland, and farmland of local importance. Land can be entered into a farmland security zone contract for a 20-year term rather than the 10-year term of Williamson Act contracts. During this time, the land is assessed at 65 percent of either its Williamson Act valuation or its Proposition 13 valuation, whichever is lower, rather

than on the actual use of the land for agricultural purposes as is required under the Williamson Act. Cities and special districts that provide non-agricultural services are generally prohibited from annexing land enrolled under a farmland security zone contract, with certain exceptions. Additionally, contracted land cannot be used for school facility purposes or acquired by school districts. Farmland Security Zone statute ([§ 51296.5 and § 51296.6](#)) prohibit a school district rendering inapplicable ("overriding") a local zoning ordinance or even acquiring land in a FSZ. Farmland security zone contracts also provide that any voter-approved special taxes levied after January 1, 1999, for urban-related services be levied upon the contracted land or the trees, vines, or crops on the land at a reduced rate, unless the urban service directly benefits the land or living improvements.

For more information on the Williamson Act and farmland security zone contracts, contact the [Department of Conservation's Division of Land Resource Protection](#).

Timberland Productivity Act

The Timberland Productivity Act of 1982 requires all counties and cities with productive private timberland to establish timberland production zones (TPZs) to discourage the premature conversion of timberland to other uses ([§51100](#), et seq.). The land use element must reflect the distribution of existing TPZs and have a land use category that provides for timber production. A city or county also may use TPZs to implement the conservation element's timber resource provisions.

Patterned after the Williamson Act, TPZs are rolling 10-year contracts that provide preferential tax assessments to qualified timberlands. Under this program, assessments on timber are based on the value of the timber at the time of harvest rather than on the market value of standing timber. Assessment of zoned timberland is based on a statutory value of land that is related to site capability and is annually indexed to changes in the periodic immediate harvest value.

During the first two years of the Act, local governments could adopt TPZs on qualified parcels without approval of the property owner, provided that statutory procedures were followed. Currently, additions to local programs are limited to requests from property owners. Subject to approval by the local legislative body, land may be removed from a TPZ by rezoning. The effective date of the new zone generally must be deferred until expiration

of the 10-year restriction. However, the local legislative body may, under special circumstances, approve immediate rezonings.

The Timberland Productivity Act did not rely on voluntary inclusion during its beginning stages. This was advantageous because restrictions could be applied in a more comprehensive manner than Williamson Act contracts and could provide coherent preserves of timberland. The primary disadvantage is that there is greater potential for conflict between property owners and local governments over the designation of lands.

Conservation, Open-Space, and Scenic Easements

State law provides several means of conserving open space through easements. Easements are attractive because they are less expensive than full-fee rights, can be more effective than zoning, do not displace property owners, and may yield property or inheritance tax advantages to the grantor. Recording the easement in the office of the County Recorder places future owners on notice of the easement's provisions.

The Conservation Easement Act ([Civil Code §815-§816](#)) enables a local government or a non-profit organization to acquire perpetual easements for the conservation of agricultural and open-space lands and for historic preservation. Granting of a conservation easement may qualify as a charitable contribution for tax purposes. The easement may also qualify as an enforceable restriction for purposes of preferential assessment.

The Open-Space Easement Act of 1974 ([§51070-§51097](#)) authorizes local governments to accept easements granted to them or to non-profit organizations for the purpose of conserving agricultural and open-space lands. These easements are established for a 10-year period and renew annually. They must be consistent with the general plan and are considered enforceable restrictions of land under a preferential taxation program. The local government is prohibited from granting building permits for land subject to such easements. Procedures for termination by nonrenewal and by abandonment are set out in statute.

The Agricultural Land Stewardship Program (ALSP) Act of 1995 ([Public Resources Code §10200-§10277](#)) authorizes the Department of Conservation to provide grants to local governments and qualified non-profit land trusts to assist in the voluntary acquisition of agricultural conservation easements. In order to be eligible for consideration, the ALSP requires that a parcel be large enough and be located in an area that is conducive to sustained commercial agricultural production. In addition, the local government within whose jurisdiction the parcel is located must support the easement acquisition and have a general plan that demonstrates a long-term commitment to agricultural land conservation. Finally, there must be evidence that without protection, the parcel is likely to be converted to a nonagricultural use in the foreseeable future.

There are other noteworthy open-space provisions in the Government Code. The Scenic Easement Deed Act ([§6950-§6954](#)) authorizes a local government to purchase fee rights or scenic easements but does not promote a specific mechanism for obtaining them. Government Code [§65870 through §65875](#) enable local governments to adopt an ordinance for the purpose of establishing open-space covenants with property owners. These are deed restrictions regulating land uses.

LAND TRUSTS

A land trust is a private non-profit organization established for the purpose of preserving or conserving natural resource and agricultural lands through acquisition. A city or county may establish cooperative policies with a local land trust or one of the national trusts, such as the Nature Conservancy, the Trust for Public Land, or the American Farmland Trust, to promote the objectives and policies of the land use, open-space, conservation, and safety elements of its general plan.

Land trusts, whether local, statewide, or national, are often funded through membership dues and donations from individuals, businesses, and foundations. Working in cooperation with landowners and governmental agencies but outside of the structure of government, a land trust can quickly, flexibly, and confidentially obtain land or development rights that would otherwise enter the open market. In many cases, particularly where natural lands are

being preserved, after obtaining the land or development rights the trust transfers its rights to a governmental agency at below-market rate for the agency to manage.

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

Transportation system management (TSM) is a means of improving the efficiency of the existing transportation system through more effective utilization of facilities and selective reduction of user demand. TSM strategies, either individually or as a package of supportive programs, attempt to reduce existing traffic congestion and vehicle miles traveled and increase the person-carrying capacity of the transportation system. Other benefits of TSM include improved air quality, conservation of energy resources, reduction of new transportation and parking facility needs, and prolonged life of existing transportation facilities.

Generally, TSM strategies cost less than traditional capacity-increasing capital projects. To achieve the highest degree of success, transportation and planning agencies, transit providers, developers, and employers should all coordinate in the planning and implementation of TSM.

TSM policies can be used to help correlate the land use and circulation elements by assuring that planned street and highway capacities will adequately accommodate traffic generated by planned land uses. TSM programs that discourage single-passenger car commutes and that promote flexible hours at places of employment may improve the levels of service of area streets and highways by reducing peak-hour flows. If a jurisdiction's conservation element includes clean air or energy conservation policies, such provisions may be implemented through TSM programs that reduce motor vehicle trips and thereby air pollution and energy use.

EXAMPLES OF TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES	
<i>Listed below are various transportation system management (TSM) techniques aimed at improving the efficiency of circulation on highway and transit systems by improving flow, reducing congestion, and increasing the carrying capacity of existing facilities. Caltrans has divided these techniques into seven categories, each containing particular measures that may be applied to specific TSM cases.</i>	
<div>Programs to Improve Traffic Flow<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Signalization– Traffic signal synchronization– One-way streets– Changeable message signs– Computerized traffic systems– Integrated single-system traffic operations systems– Reversible lanes– Ramp meters– Intersection widening</div> <div>Provision for Pedestrians, Bicycles, and the Disabled<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Bicycle lanes/paths– Bicycle storage– Pedestrian and/or transit malls– Pedestrian signals– Bicycle-actuated signals– Bicycle/transit integration– Weather- and theft-resistant bicycle parking facilities at places of employment, shopping areas, etc.– Shower and locker facilities at places of employment for bicycling employees– Universal access improvements</div> <div>Actions to Reduce Motor Vehicle Use<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Carpool/vanpool matching program– Carpool public information– Carpool/vanpool incentives– Neighborhood ridesharing– Highway surveillance– Subsidized rideshare vehicles– Guaranteed ride home for carpoolers, transit riders, etc.– Transportation management associations– Inter-city urban commuter rail</div>	<div>Preferential Treatment for Transit and Other High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Strategies<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Exclusive highway bus or bus/carpool lanes– Contra-flow HOV lanes– Reserved lanes or dedicated streets for buses and HOVs– Bus turnouts– Bus-actuated signals– Ramp meter bypass lanes for HOVs</div> <div>Changes in Work Schedules, Fares, and Tolls<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Work hour management (compressed work week, flexible work hours)– Transit/HOV bypass at toll plazas– Bus fare restructuring/subsidies– Telecommuting</div> <div>Improved Public Transit<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Feeder services improvements– Demand responsive system– Shelters and other passenger amenities– Rehabilitated/expanded bus fleet<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Passenger information system improvements– Transit marketing</div> <div>Management/Control of Parking<ul style="list-style-type: none">– On-street parking controls– Increased parking fees– Park-and-ride facilities– Preferential parking for carpools/vanpools– Residential permit parking– Removal of on-street parking– Strict enforcement of on-street parking codes– Graduated parking fees with higher fees for single-occupant vehicles– Metered on-street parking</div>

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING MECHANISMS

The timing, type, and quality of development is often directly related to the availability of infrastructure and public services. The principal funding sources for local government infrastructure are taxes, benefit assessments, bonds, and exactions (including impact fees). The following discussion briefly describes each of these.

It is important to remember that implementation measures identified in the General Plan (and the mitigation measures identified in its EIR) must be fiscally constrained and feasible to implement in order to be vertically consistent and legally defensible. Cities and counties are advised to collaborate proactively with their regional public and private sector partners in order to develop and adopt multi-party fair share impact fee programs needed to finance planned transportation infrastructure improvements. In light of the legislative trends outlined in Appendix C, cities and counties are advised to base such impact fee programs on multi-modal system improvements with a demonstrated ability to reduce the VMT generated by new development.

Taxes

Taxes are either general or special. A general tax, such as the ad valorem property tax (which is capped at one percent of assessed valuation by Proposition 13), a utility tax, or a hotel tax, is collected and placed in the city's or county's general fund. General taxes are not dedicated to any specific purpose and are usually imposed to pay for capital improvements or services that will be used by the entire community.

A special tax is a non-ad valorem tax that is either levied by a city or county and dedicated to a particular use or levied by a special district (e.g., a school district, a transit district, etc.) to finance its activities. Special taxes often finance specific projects or services, such as flood control or ambulance service.

The Mello-Roos Community Facilities Act of 1982 authorizes a special tax that is primarily intended and commonly used to finance the infrastructure needs of new development. Under the Mello-Roos Act, cities, counties, and special districts create "community facilities

districts” and levy special taxes within those districts to finance new public improvements, police and fire protection, and school construction ([§53311, et seq.](#)). The Mello-Roos Act also authorizes the issuance of bonds.

The [Property Assessed Clean Energy Program \(PACE\)](#), is a partnership with the federal government to finance energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements in multifamily housing throughout the state. For more information on PACE, see [here](#).

Proposition 218, approved by voters in November 1996, requires a popular election in order to levy a local general tax (with a simple majority needed for approval) or a special tax (with a two-thirds majority needed for approval). It also requires a simple majority election in order to levy certain service fees, although generally not development impact fees. The effect of Proposition 218 on local financing has been profound. Prior to its passage, an election usually was not required in order to impose or increase taxes, so a jurisdiction could more easily raise needed revenue.

Benefit Assessments

Benefit assessments (also known as special assessments) are among the oldest techniques for financing the construction and maintenance of such physical improvements as sidewalks, sewers, streets, storm drains, lighting, and flood control that benefit distinct areas. Most of the numerous assessment acts authorize the use of bonds, paid for by an assessment.

Unlike general taxes, benefit assessments are not subject to a two-thirds vote requirement. Instead, as a result of Proposition 218 of 1996, a proposed assessment is subject to a ballot procedure that enables property owners to reject the proposal by majority protest among those returning ballots. Property owners’ ballots are weighted: those who would pay a larger assessment have a greater vote.

A benefit assessment cannot be levied on a parcel that does not receive a direct benefit from the improvement or service being financed. The amount assessed to a parcel is strictly limited to the pro-rata share of benefit being received. The improvement must provide a special benefit to each assessed parcel, above and beyond any general benefit that might accrue.

Proposition 218 created important limitations on the use of benefit assessments. Prior to levying any such assessment, OPR recommends reviewing Proposition 218 and any implementing statutes. For more information, see the following sources: *Proposition 218 Implementation Guide* (League of California Cities, 1997), *Understanding Proposition 218* (Office of the Legislative Analyst, 1996), and *A Planner's Guide to Financing Public Improvements* (OPR, 1997).

Bonds

Cities, counties, school districts, and other districts may issue general obligation (G.O.) bonds for the acquisition or improvement of real property, such as buildings, streets, sewers, water systems, and other infrastructure, upon approval by two-thirds of the voters casting ballots. G.O. bonds are secured by local governments' ability to levy property taxes but may also be repaid from other revenue sources as available. School district (K-12) and community college district bonds may be passed by a 55% vote rather than a two-thirds vote pursuant to Proposition 39 of 2000.

Revenue bonds are secured by the future revenues of the facility or enterprise they are financing. Stadiums, wastewater treatment facilities, and parking facilities are three examples of the types of revenue-producing facilities that are commonly financed by revenue bonds. The Revenue Bond Law of 1941 (§54300, et seq.) provides for a source of funds for the construction of hospitals, water facilities, sewer plants, parking facilities, bridges, auditoriums, and other such public facilities. Because revenue bonds are secured by the proceeds from the enterprise they fund, they generally carry higher interest rates than general obligation bonds.

Lease revenue bonds are a similar tool. Instead of being issued by the city or county, lease revenue bonds are issued by a non-profit corporation or a special authority that constructs a facility and leases it to the city or county. Lease payments provide the revenue to pay off the bond. When the bond is retired, the facility is turned over to the city or county. Some local agencies have used this method to finance administrative centers and schools.

Exactions

Exactions are dedications of land, improvements, or impact fees imposed on new development to fund the construction of capital facilities. They cannot be used for operations and maintenance. The authority to impose exactions on development derives from the police power and statute. An exaction is levied to finance a specific activity, facility, or service and can only be levied once, at the time of project approval.

Exactions may only be imposed where they will advance a legitimate state interest (e.g., health, safety, and welfare issues, such as smooth traffic flow, availability of recreational facilities, sewer and water service, etc.) and are necessary to mitigate the adverse impact to that interest that would otherwise result from the project *Nollan v. California Coastal Commission* (1987) 107 S.Ct. 3141). This principle is reflected in the Mitigation Fee Act (§66000, et seq.), which lays out the groundrules for imposing development impact fees and other exactions.

While the general plan may form a policy basis for exactions, keep in mind that it does not preempt constitutional limits on regulatory "takings" or enable any exaction that would conflict with state law. The *Nollan* decision established that there must be a nexus between the exaction and the state interest being advanced. The U.S. Supreme Court, in *Dolan v. City of Tigard* (1994) 114 S.Ct. 2309, added a second step to the analysis: there must be a "rough proportionality" between the exaction being imposed and the relative need created by the project. Reducing *Dolan* to its simplest terms, the court overturned the city's requirements for bicycle path and floodway dedications because they were out of proportion to the impact on flooding and the contribution to bicycle traffic that would have resulted from the proposed expansion of a plumbing supply store, even though Tigard's comprehensive plan contained definitive policies relating to such dedications.

The California Supreme Court clarified the *Nollan* and *Dolan* principles in *Ehrlich v. City of Culver City* (1996) 12 C4th 854. The court made two key points:

1. Developers who wish to challenge a development fee on either statutory or constitutional grounds must do so under provisions of the Mitigation Fee Act (§66020).
2. The two part *Nollan/Dolan* test applies only to ad hoc fees and dedications of land (as opposed to legislatively enacted fee ordinances). The “rough proportionality” component does not apply to legislatively enacted fees, such as Culver City’s Art in Public Places (here the court also held that this ordinance, which was enacted to enhance aesthetics, was a reasonable use of the city’s police power under *Nollan*).

In some jurisdictions, where development may adversely affect the availability of low- and moderate-income housing, exactions are levied upon developers to finance the construction of sufficient housing to alleviate that impact. San Francisco, for example, has an inclusionary housing program that mandates the construction of affordable housing or payment of in-lieu fees in accordance with a prescribed formula, which links projected employment to the number of housing units, as a condition of new downtown office development.

Public Needs and Private Dollars, by William Abbott, Marian E. Moe, and Marilee Hansen (see the Bibliography) discusses the legal basis for development exactions and offers practical, California-specific advice about calculating and imposing them.

Privatization

Recent years have seen a growth in the popularity of privatization--the use of private contractors or private ownership--to provide local services, such as garbage collection, fire protection, and street maintenance. Although not strictly a financing measure, privatization is a strategy that can help stretch limited public funds. Privatization has certain advantages: local governments need not purchase and maintain specialized machinery, personnel for specialized or seasonal tasks need not be maintained on salary, and the costs to local governments of providing services may be reduced. It also has disadvantages: special skills are needed to establish and manage the contract with the private-service provider, quality is beyond the direct control of the local government and elected officials, and, if it is necessary to replace the contractor, residents may face a period of interrupted service.

TRANSPORTATION FINANCING METHODS

Caltrans' Division of Transportation Planning has provided the following descriptions of general categories and examples of measures to generate additional funds for transportation projects:

- Business license taxes, which are often based upon gross receipts or number of employees, since business activity and employment concentration affect traffic congestion. San Francisco has used this method to provide funds for the operation of its municipal railway.
- Parking regulations, such as neighborhood parking stickers, parking meters, and daily tickets, which can bring in substantial funds in urban areas. These revenues can be used for a variety of local transportation programs.
- Transportation impact fees (also called traffic impact mitigation fees, system development charges, and adequate public facilities fees) based upon the traffic projected to be generated and/or the cost estimates of public transportation facilities necessitated by development. In the Westchester area of Los Angeles, a one-time fee is collected for each p.m. peak-hour trip generated by new commercial and office development to cover needed areawide improvements. In Thousand Oaks, the city requires traffic mitigation fees to pay for signals, the cost of paving adjacent arterials, and off-site improvements, all of which are made necessary by the traffic resulting from new development. To offset development impacts on the local transit system, San Francisco charges a transit impact fee based on building square footage.
- Airspace leasing, which taps the value of public rights-of-way in urban areas. A governmental agency may capitalize on that value by leasing to the private sector unoccupied space over, under, or within the right-of-way. This has been used for a variety of purposes, including parks, parking lots, cellular communications, office buildings, restaurants, and public facilities.
- Public/private partnerships, development agreements, and cost-sharing, which involve developing agreements between the private and public sectors that split responsibilities for the cost of infrastructure provision, operation, and

maintenance. This technique tends to be more flexible and less bound by legal constraints than other measures.

- Privatization, which may reduce or eliminate the need for public funds for transportation infrastructure if the prospect of profit exists. California's first modern toll roads were built in Orange County by private funds. Private provision of transit services is becoming more common as it is connected to specific developments. Individual developers and employers have designed and initiated traffic mitigation programs, such as traffic flow improvements, flexible work hours, and bicycle facilities. In addition, recent trends show groups of developers, employers, and businesses banding together in transportation management associations to address mutual traffic concerns in a specific area and developing programs such as those mentioned above. Such measures have been established in the cities of El Segundo, Pleasanton, and Berkeley (in cooperation with the University of California).

CONSISTENCY IN IMPLEMENTATION

The general plan is largely implemented through zoning and subdivision decisions. In 1971, the Legislature made consistency with the general plan a determinative factor for subdivision approvals. Since then, lawmakers have continued to add consistency requirements to California's planning and land use laws. Other statutes, while not mandating consistency, require findings or a report on whether various local actions conform to the general plan. Consistency statutes and legal precedents are detailed below.

In order for zoning and other measures to comply with consistency requirements, the general plan itself must first be complete and adequate (i.e., it must address all locally relevant issues and be internally consistent). In 1984, the Court of Appeal ruled that a finding of consistency based on an inadequate general plan was a legal impossibility (*Neighborhood Action Group v. County of Calaveras* (1984) 156 Cal.App.3d 1176, 1184, based on 58 Opps. Cal.Atty.Gen 21, 24 (1975)). More recently, the appeals court ruled that a subordinate land use approval, such as a subdivision map, can only be challenged on the basis of an internal general plan inconsistency when there is a nexus between the particular

approval and the claimed inconsistency in the general plan (*Garat v. Riverside (1991) 2 Cal.App.4th 259*).

The California Attorney General has opined that "the term 'consistent with' is used interchangeably with 'conformity with'" (*58 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 21, 25 (1975)*). A general rule for consistency determinations can be stated as follows: "An action, program, or project is consistent with the general plan if, considering all its aspects, it will further the objectives and policies of the general plan and will support their attainment."

The city or county is responsible for determining whether an activity is consistent with the general plan. A city council's finding of a project's consistency with the plan would be reversed by a court if, based on the evidence before the council, a reasonable person could not have reached the same conclusion (*No Oil, Inc. v. City of Los Angeles (1987) 196 Cal.App.3d 223*).

In *Families Unafraid to Uphold Rural El Dorado County v. El Dorado County Board of Supervisors (1998) 62 Cal.App.4th 1332*, the court held that "[The] nature of the policy and the nature of the inconsistency are critical factors to consider." A project is clearly inconsistent when it conflicts with one or more specific, fundamental, and mandatory policies of the general plan (*Families Unafraid, supra*). However, any given project need not be in perfect conformity with each and every policy of the general plan if those policies are not relevant or leave the city or county room for interpretation (*Sequoayah Hills Homeowners Association v. City of Oakland, (1998) 23 Cal.App 4th 704 (1993)*).

Placer County's Online General Plan is one method to help ensure consistency. Upon receiving a development proposal or other entitlement request, county staff enters distinguishing project features into a computer program. The program analyzes the proposal by checking for general plan and community plan consistency, identifying goals and policies by topic, and preparing a report of its results. The software can compare project characteristics to the goals and policies of the general plan and each of its elements, providing an unbiased consistency analysis.

ZONING CONSISTENCY

Counties, general law cities, and charter cities with populations of more than two million are required to maintain consistency between their zoning ordinance and their adopted general plan (§65860). Charter cities with populations under two million are not subject to this mandate but should choose to enact their own code requirements for consistency (§65803 and §65860).

Where the consistency requirement applies, every zoning action, such as the adoption of new zoning ordinance text or the amendment of a zoning ordinance map, must be consistent with the general plan. A zoning ordinance that is inconsistent with the general plan at the time it is enacted is "invalid when passed" (*Leshar Communications v. City of Walnut Creek* (1990) 52 Cal.3d 531; *Sierra Club v. Board of Supervisors* (1981) 126 Cal.App.3d 698).

By the same token, when a general plan amendment makes the zoning inconsistent, the zoning must be changed to re-establish consistency "within a reasonable time" (§65860(c)). According to the California Supreme Court, "[t]he Planning and Zoning Law does not contemplate that general plans will be amended to conform to zoning ordinances. The tail does not wag the dog." (*Leshar Communications v. City of Walnut Creek, supra*).

State law does not prescribe what constitutes "a reasonable time" for reconciling the zoning ordinance with the general plan. OPR suggests that when possible, general plan amendments and necessary related zoning changes be heard concurrently (§65862). When concurrent hearings are not feasible, OPR suggests the following time periods:

- For minor general plan amendments (those involving a relatively small area), six months.
- For extensive amendments to the general plan (such as a revision that results in the inconsistency of large areas), two years.

Zoning-related initiatives and referenda must also maintain general plan consistency. An initiative seeking to impose growth management regulations was invalidated when it was found to be inconsistent with the general plan (*Leshar Communications v. City of Walnut Creek, supra*). A referendum that sought to overturn a rezoning approval was invalidated because the rezoning was necessary to maintain or achieve consistency with the general plan (*deBottari v. City of Norco* (1985) 171 Cal.App.3d 1204; *City of Irvine v. Irvine Citizens Against Overdevelopment* (1994) 25 Cal.App.4th 868).

Assessing and Achieving Zoning Consistency

Zoning consistency can be broken down into three parts: uses and standards, spatial patterns, and timing. These are described below.

The local agency's general plan and zoning ordinance contain text and maps that specify development standards and the proposed location of uses for the community. The development standards and uses specified for all land use categories in the zoning ordinance—density, lot size, height, and the like—must be consistent with the development standards and uses specified in the general plan's text and diagram of proposed land use. This has several implications.

The zoning scheme, with its range of zoning districts and their associated development standards or regulations, must be broad enough to implement the general plan. For example, if a general plan contains three residential land use designations, each with its own residential intensity and density standard, then the zoning ordinance should typically have at least as many zoning districts with appropriate standards. Similarly, if the general plan identifies seismic hazard areas and calls for zoning measures to implement safety policies, the zoning ordinance must contain appropriate provisions, such as a hazard overlay zone, or specific development standards.

When a new element or major revision to a general plan is adopted, the zoning scheme should be thoroughly reviewed for consistency. It must be amended if necessary to ensure that it is adequate to carry out the new element or revisions.

When rezoning occurs, the newly adopted zoning must be appropriate and consistent with all elements of the general plan. This includes not only the land uses and development standards, but also the transportation, safety, open-space, and other objectives and policies contained in the plan.

Both the general plan diagram of proposed land use and the zoning map should set forth similar patterns of land use distribution. However, the maps need not be identical if the general plan text provides for flexibility of interpretation or for future development (*Las Virgenes Homeowners v. County of Los Angeles* (1986) 177 Cal.App.3d 312). For example, a

land use diagram may designate an area for residential development while the zoning map may show the same area as predominantly residential with a few pockets of commercial use. Despite the residential designation, the commercial zoning could be consistent with the general plan if the plan's policies and standards allow for neighborhood commercial development within residential areas. Likewise, more than one zoning classification may be consistent with any one of the general plan's land use categories. For example, both R-1 (residential) and PUD (planned unit development) may be consistent zoning for a low-density residential category in the plan.

The timing of development is closely linked to the question of consistency of spatial patterns. A general plan is long term in nature, while zoning responds to shorter-term needs and conditions. In many cases, zoning will only gradually fulfill the prescriptions of the general plan. Timing may be particularly important in rural areas designated for future urbanization. If the general plan contains policies regarding orderly development, adequate public services, and compact urban growth, rezoning a large area from a low-intensity use (e.g., agriculture) to a more intensive one (e.g., residential) before urban services are available would be inconsistent with the general plan. Conversely, an inconsistency may be created when general plan policies promote high-intensity development in an area but the jurisdiction instead permits low-intensity uses.

Since timing can be a problem, general plans should provide clear guidance for the pace of future development, perhaps by using five-year increments or by establishing a set of conditions to be met before consistent zoning would be considered timely.

Local governments have devised a number of ways to evaluate and achieve zoning consistency. A fairly common approach is to employ a matrix comparing the general plan's land use categories and associated development standards with the zoning districts and their corresponding zoning ordinance development standards. To indicate the degree of zoning consistency with the plan, many matrices feature categories ranging from "highly compatible" to "clearly incompatible." An intermediate category, "conditionally compatible," could reflect zoning that by itself is not compatible but could become compatible if measures such as a PUD overlay were imposed to reduce or eliminate potential conflicts. The chart on the previous page illustrates a hypothetical matrix. It may be modified to match local conditions.

The matrix approach has its limitations. By itself, a matrix cannot answer questions about the zoning's compatibility with the objectives, policies, and programs of the general plan, nor can it answer questions about timing. A number of local governments use a checklist to evaluate the consistency of individual zoning proposals. The checklist repeats the major goals and policies of the general plan and rates the degree to which the proposed zoning conforms to each of them (e.g., "further," "deters," "no effect"). A point system that rates development projects by their level of consistency with the goals, objectives, and policies of the general plan is a similar approach.

Subdivision Consistency

Before a city or county may approve a subdivision map (including parcel maps) and its provisions for design and improvement, the city or county must find that the proposed subdivision map is consistent with the general plan and any applicable specific plans (§66473.5). These findings can only be made when the local agency has officially adopted a general plan and the proposed subdivision is "compatible with the objectives, policies, general land uses and programs specified in such a plan."

Section 66474 and §66474.61 require a city or county to deny approval of a tentative map if it makes either of the following findings: the proposed map is not consistent with applicable general and specific plans or the design or improvement of the proposed subdivision is not consistent with applicable general and specific plans.

The checklist on the following page demonstrates one way to evaluate subdivision consistency.

ENFORCEMENT AND REMEDIES

Any resident, property owner, or other aggrieved party, including a public agency, may sue to enforce the requirements for the adoption of an adequate general plan (58 *Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 21 (1975)*). The same is true for zoning consistency with the general plan (§65860(b)), and for subdivisions (§66499.33). As the state's chief law enforcement officer,

the Attorney General may do the same (§12606 and California Constitution, Article V, §13). Additionally, persons living outside a city have standing to sue if the city's zoning practices exclude them from residing in the city or raise their housing costs by adversely affecting the regional housing market (*Stocks v. City of Irvine* (1981) 114 Cal.App.3d 520).

The courts may impose various remedies for failure to have a complete and adequate general plan or for inconsistency of zoning and subdivision actions and public works projects (§65750, et seq.). One is a writ of mandate to compel a local government to adopt a legally adequate general plan. The courts also have general authority to issue an injunction to limit approvals of additional subdivision maps, parcel maps, rezonings, and public works projects or (under limited circumstances) the issuance of building permits pending adoption of a complete and adequate general plan (*58 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 21* (1975), *Friends of "B" Street v. City of Hayward* (1980) 106 Cal.App.3d 988, *Camp v. Mendocino* (1981) 123 Cal.App.3d 334). Where a court finds that specific zoning or subdivision actions or public works projects are inconsistent with the general plan, it may set aside such actions or projects. Under certain circumstances, the court may impose any of these forms of relief prior to a judicial determination of a general plan's inadequacy (§65757). These provisions, however, do not limit the court's authority to impose other appropriate remedies.

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORTS

After the general plan has been adopted, §65400(b) requires the planning agency to provide an annual report to their legislative body, OPR, and HCD on the status of the plan and progress in its implementation. The report must detail progress in meeting the jurisdiction's share of regional housing needs determined pursuant to §65584 and local efforts to remove governmental constraints to the maintenance, improvement, and development of housing pursuant to §65583(c)(3).

The annual progress report must be provided to the legislative body, OPR, and HCD on or before April 1 of each year. Jurisdictions must report on a calendar-year basis (January 1 through December 31). Jurisdictions are able to complete the [housing element](#) portion of the APR online through the Department of housing and Community Development's online

portal. While there is a standard format for the housing element portion of the annual report, there is no standardized format for the preparation of the annual progress report for the rest of the general plan. The form and content of the report may vary based on the circumstances, resources, and constraints of each jurisdiction. This section is meant to provide general guidance to cities and counties in the preparation of their annual progress reports.

Purpose of the Report

- To provide enough information to allow local legislative bodies to assess how the general plan is being implemented in accordance with adopted goals, policies, and implementation measures.
- To provide enough information to identify necessary course adjustments or modifications to the general plan as a means to improve local implementation.
- To provide a clear correlation between land use decisions that have been made during the 12-month reporting period and the goals, policies, and implementation measures contained in the general plan.
- To provide information regarding local agency progress in meeting its share of regional housing needs and local efforts to remove governmental constraints to the development of housing (as defined in §65584 and §65583(c)(3)).

Format of the Report (General)

The following describes ways in which various cities and counties have organized and formatted their annual progress reports:

- **Focus on individual policies and implementation measures:** Provide a comprehensive listing of all general plan policies, categorized by element, with a commentary on how each policy was implemented during the reporting period (i.e., a description of the activities underway or completed for

implementation of each policy). This listing can most easily be accomplished by using a table format. (Examples: Carlsbad, Citrus Heights)

- **Focus on development activities and projects approved:** Provide comprehensive listing of all development applications that the planning agency received and processed with commentary on how the agency's actions on these development applications further the goals, policies, and/or implementation measures of the general plan. Link the major projects, including public projects, to the general plan using policy numbers or by element. (Examples: Placer County, Signal Hill)
- **Focus on general plan elements:** Provide a general summary of each of the mandatory and optional elements of the general plan with a brief description of various actions taken by the agency (e.g., development application approvals, adoption of ordinances or plans, agency-initiated planning studies, etc.) that advanced specific goals and policies of each element. (Examples: Camarillo, San Luis Obispo, Redlands)
- **Broad annual report format:** Incorporate the annual progress report into a broadly focused annual report on all of the activities and programs of the jurisdiction, drawing upon data and sources such as an annual performance report on budgeting, processing of land use entitlements, redevelopment activities, housing construction, or other programs or "state of the city/county" reports.

Format of the Report (Housing Element)

In 2010, the State Department of Housing and Community Development adopted regulations on the preparation of the annual report on the housing element portion of the general plan. All APRs must conform to these regulations. Forms, instructions, and a copy of the regulations can be found at the HCD's website at <http://www.hcd.ca.gov/regulations/>. In general the following information is required for housing element reporting.

A listing of building permits issued for the calendar year by income category.

Demonstration of the progress towards meeting the regional housing need.

A description of the progress in implementation of the policies and programs in the housing element.

The report must be considered at an annual public meeting before the legislative body where members of the public shall be allowed to provide oral testimony and written comments.

As an addendum to the APR a city or county housing successor agency must report on housing financial and activity information pursuant to Health and Safety Code 34176.1:

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

CONSISTENCY PROVISIONS IN STATE LAW AND LEGAL PRECEDENTS

All statutory references are to the California Government Code unless otherwise noted.

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Agricultural Preserves

- “ §51234 requires that agricultural preserves established under the Williamson Act be consistent with the general plan.
- “ §51282 requires a city or county, when approving a Williamson Act contract cancellation, to make a finding that the proposed alternate use is consistent with the general plan.

Capital Improvements

- “ §65401 and §65402 require planning agencies to review and report on the consistency with the applicable general plan of proposed city, county, and special district capital projects, including land acquisition and disposal.
- “ §65103(c) requires planning agencies to review annually their city or county capital improvement programs and other local agencies’ public works projects for consistency with the general plan.
- “ *Friends of B Street v. City of Hayward* (1980) 106 Cal.App.3d 988 held that governmental capital facilities projects must be consistent with the general plan.
- “ §53090, et seq., require that most public works projects undertaken by special districts, including school districts, must be consistent with local zoning, which in turn must be consistent with the general plan. A special district governing board may render the zoning ordinance inapplicable if it makes a finding after a public hearing that there is no feasible alternative to the project (§53096). State entities are an exception to this consistency requirement (*Rapid Transit Advocates, Inc. v. Southern California Rapid Transit District* (1986) 185 Cal.App.3d 996).

Condominium Conversion

- “ §66427.2 requires that when the general plan contains objectives and policies addressing the conversion of rental units to condominiums, any conversion must be consistent with those objectives and policies.

Development Agreements

- “ §65867.5 requires development agreements to be consistent with the general plan.

Housing Authority Projects

- “ Health and Safety Code §34326 declares that all housing projects undertaken by housing authorities are subject to local planning and zoning laws.

Integrated Waste Management

- “ Public Resources Code §4170 states that if a county determines that the existing capacity of a solid waste facility will be exhausted within 15 years or if the county desires additional capacity, then the countywide siting element of the county’s hazardous waste management plan must identify an area or areas, consistent with the applicable general plan, for the location of new solid waste transformation or disposal facilities or for the expansion of existing facilities.
- “ Public Resources Code §41702 states that an area is consistent with the city or county general plan if:
 1. The city or county has adopted a general plan.
 2. The area reserved for the new or expanded facility is located in, or coextensive with, a land use area designated or authorized by the applicable general plan for solid waste facilities.
 3. The adjacent or nearby land use authorized by the applicable general plan is compatible with the establishment or expansion of the solid waste facility.

On-Site Wastewater Disposal Zones

- “ Health and Safety Code §6965 requires a finding that the operation of an on-site wastewater disposal zone created under Health and Safety Code §6950, et seq., will not result in land uses that are inconsistent with the applicable general plan.

Open Space

- “ §65566 requires that acquisition, disposal, restriction, or regulation of open-space land by a city or county be consistent with the open-space element of the general plan.
- “ §65567 prohibits the issuance of building permits, approval of subdivision maps, and adoption of open-space zoning ordinances that are inconsistent with the open-space element of the general plan.
- “ §65910 specifies that every city and county must adopt an open-space zoning ordinance consistent with the open-space element of the general plan.
- “ §51084 requires cities and counties accepting or approving an open-space easement to make a finding that preservation of the open-space land is consistent with the general plan.

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Consistency Provisions in State Law and Legal Precedents, Continued

Park Dedications

- “ §66477 enables local governments to require as a condition of subdivision and parcel map approval the dedication of land or the payment of in lieu fees for parks and recreational purposes if the parks and recreational facilities are consistent with adopted general or specific plan policies and standards.

Parking Authority Projects

- “ Streets and Highway Code §32503 specifies that parking authorities, in planning and locating any parking facility, are subject to the relationship of the facility to any officially adopted master plan or sections of such master plan for the development of the area in which the authority functions to the same extent as if it were a private entity.

Planning Commission Recommendations

- “ §65855 requires that the planning commission's written recommendation to the legislative body on the adoption or amendment of a zoning ordinance include a report on the relationship of the proposed adoption or amendment to the general plan.

Reservations of Land Within Subdivisions

- “ §66479 specifies that reservations of land for parks, recreational facilities, fire stations, libraries, and other public uses within a subdivision must conform to the general plan.

Special Housing Programs

- “ Health and Safety Code §50689.5 specifies that housing and housing programs developed under Health and Safety Code §50680, et seq., for the developmentally disabled, mentally disordered, and physically disabled must be consistent with the housing element of the general plan.

Specific Plans

- “ §65359 requires that a specific plan be reviewed and amended as necessary to make it consistent with the applicable general plan.
- “ §65454 specifies that a specific plan may not be adopted or amended unless the proposed plan is consistent with the general plan.

Street, Highway, and Service Easement Abandonments

- “ Streets and Highways Code §8313 specifies that prior to vacating a street, highway, or public service easement, the legislative body must consider the applicable general plan.

Transit Village Development Plan

- “ §65460.8 states that a transit village plan prepared under the Transit Village Development Planning Act of 1994 must be consistent with the city or county general plan.

Project Review Under CEQA

- “ Title 14, California Code of Regulations, §15125(b) (CEQA Guidelines) requires examination of projects subject to the provisions of CEQA for consistency with the general plan.
- “ Public Resources Code §21080.10 and 21080.14 exempt specified housing projects from the requirements of CEQA, but only when consistent with the general plan and meeting other criteria.

Contents of the Report

Each jurisdiction should determine which locally relevant issues are important to include in the annual report. The following items may be useful in the annual progress report:

- Introduction.
- Table of contents.
- Date of presentation to and acceptance by the local legislative body.
- List of major agency-initiated planning activities that were initiated, in progress, or completed during the reporting period (i.e., master plans, specific plans, master environmental assessments, annexation studies, and other studies or plans carried out in support of specific general plan implementation measures). Include a brief comment on how each of these activities advances the goals, policies, and/or implementation measures contained in the general plan. Provide specific reference to individual elements where applicable.
- List each of the general plan amendments that have been processed, along with a brief description and the action taken (e.g., approval, denial, etc.). This listing should include agency-initiated as well as applicant-driven amendments.
- List each of the development applications that have been processed, along with a brief description, the action taken (e.g., approval, denial, etc.), and a brief comment on how each action furthers the goals, policies, and/or implementation measures of the general plan. Provide specific reference to individual elements where applicable.
- Identify significant projects built within jurisdiction but not approved by jurisdiction, such as large school facilities not approved by city or county, but affecting general plan.
- Identify priorities for land use decision-making that have been established by the local legislative body (e.g., passage of moratoria, emergency ordinances, development of community or specific plans, etc.). • Quantify, where appropriate, existing and projected housing needs for all income levels pursuant to housing element law (§65583) with regard to:
 - The appropriateness of the housing goals, objectives, and policies in contributing to the attainment of state housing goals.

- The effectiveness of the housing element in attaining the community's housing goals and objectives.
- The progress in implementing the housing element.
- The annual progress report should identify goals, policies, objectives, standards, or other plan proposals that need to be added, deleted, amended, or otherwise adjusted.
- If the jurisdiction is in the process of a comprehensive general plan update, the progress report can be limited to a brief letter describing the scope of work and anticipated completion date.

Suggested Reporting Methods on Regional Housing Needs

HCD recommends the following step-by-step approach for cities and counties to report their progress in meeting their share of the regional housing needs.

First, determine the total net housing units added in the reporting year. If the progress report is based on the calendar year, one approach is to report the change in the Department of Finance's (DOF) total units estimate over the year. If the progress report is based on the fiscal year or other time period, local estimates will need to be prepared using DOF and local data. A local estimate of net units added should reflect the following:

- An estimate or records for total units completed.
- If unit completion data is not available, units completed may be estimated from permit issuance data with the use of an estimate of the average time lag between permit issuance and completion and an estimate of the percentage of permits issued that were not used.
- An estimate or records for total units removed.
- A definition of what constitutes a new unit for regional share purposes.

On the latter point, for example, shared housing arrangements do not produce new dwelling units as the term is used in DOF estimates and in regional projected needs shares

and should not be included. In general, a unit should be counted if it meets DOF's functional definition for inclusion in its annual unit estimates.

Second, determine affordability characteristics of units added in the reporting year. Third, compare units added to regional share objectives.

Submitting the Report to OPR and HCD

Annual progress reports can be submitted to OPR in either electronic or paper format. If you wish to submit your annual report to OPR electronically, e-mail it to state.clearinghouse@opr.ca.gov and limit the file size to 2 KB or less. Word, Excel, PowerPoint, text, RTF, PDF, or PageMaker are the only acceptable file formats. Printed copies of the annual report should be sent to Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse and Planning Unit, P.O. Box 3044, Sacramento, CA 95812-3044.

A copy of the report must also be sent to the Department of Housing and Community Development, Housing Policy Division, 1800 Third St., Rm. 430, Sacramento, CA 95814.

Chapter 10: CEQA

Designing Healthy, Equitable, Resilient, and Economically Vibrant Places

[quote]

Introduction

Because general plans govern the type and location of new development, new or amended general plan policies may lead to significant changes in the environment. The California Environmental Quality Act, also known as “CEQA,” requires cities and counties to study those potential environmental impacts as part of the adoption or update process. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21000, et seq.; see also CEQA Guidelines, § 15378.) Where those impacts may be significant, the city or county must prepare an environmental impact report (EIR). The primary purpose of an EIR is to inform decision-makers and the public of the potential significant environmental effects of a proposal, less damaging alternatives, and possible ways to reduce or avoid environmental damage. This information enables environmental considerations to influence policy development, thereby ensuring that the plan’s policies will address potential environmental impacts and the means to avoid them. This chapter addresses some key considerations for complying with CEQA in preparing a new general plan, a general plan update, or a general plan amendment. Some of those considerations include:

- Identifying major points of intersection between the general plan and CEQA processes;
- Comparing different types of EIRs to determine which might best suit the needs of the city or county and that would enable use of several streamlining mechanisms for later development approvals, and
- Mitigation Monitoring and General Plan Implementation

Key CEQA Policies to Remember

Before describing specific considerations for CEQA review of general plans, it is useful to first review several key policies underlying CEQA that are relevant to the general plan process.

- **CEQA should be integrated into planning processes and guide development of the plan itself.** (Pub. Resources Code, §§ 21003(a), 21080.5.) Information developed as part of the CEQA process should influence the development of general plan policies. CEQA should not just be a post hoc rationalization of decisions that have already been made. (*Laurel Heights Improvement Assn. v. Regents of University of California* (1988) 47 Cal. 3d 376, 395 (“the later the environmental review process begins, the more bureaucratic and financial momentum there is behind a proposed project, thus providing a strong incentive to ignore environmental concerns that could be dealt with more easily at an early stage of the project”).)
- **While the CEQA process should occur early enough to influence development of the general plan, it should not happen until environmental review will produce meaningful information.** (CEQA Guidelines § 15004.) For example, an EIR will not provide meaningful information if it is prepared before visioning or actual policy language is developed.
- **The CEQA process should be efficient.** (Pub. Resources Code, § 21003(f).) “An EIR on a project such as the adoption or amendment of a ... local general plan should focus on the secondary effects that can be expected to follow from the adoption or amendment, but the EIR need not be as detailed as an EIR on the specific construction projects that might follow.” (CEQA Guidelines, § 15146(b).) Further, once analysis occurs in connection with a general plan EIR, that information and analysis should be used to inform later project applications.

These policies can help guide planners as they confront questions about precisely how to conduct environmental review for a general plan process.

Considerations for General Plan EIRs

The procedure for preparing and using an EIR is described in detail in the state CEQA Guidelines (Title 14, California Code of Regulations, §15000, et seq.). A summary of the CEQA process is provided in the [California Planning Guide](#) (OPR, Dec. 2005). The following discussion highlights some of the key points that are particularly important when preparing an EIR for a new general plan, an element, or a comprehensive revision.

A general plan for which an EIR is prepared is considered a project of statewide, regional, or areawide significance (CEQA Guidelines §15206). This means that the lead agency must conduct at least one scoping meeting and the EIR must be circulated through the State Clearinghouse for review by relevant state agencies. In addition, the city or county must consult with transportation planning agencies during the development of the general plan and EIR. (Id. at § 15086(a)(5).) Further, “any transportation information generated by a required monitoring or reporting program shall be submitted to the transportation planning agency in the region where the project is located and to the California Department of Transportation.” (See *id.* at § 15097(g).)

The plan EIR, to a certain extent, can be seen as describing the relationship between the proposed density and intensity of land use described by the plan and the carrying capacity of the area.

Baseline

The EIR must describe the existing local and regional physical environment, emphasizing those features that are likely to be affected by the plan and the environmental constraints and resources that are rare or unique to the area. It should describe existing infrastructure, such as roads, water systems, and sewage treatment facilities, along with their capacities and current levels of use. It should also discuss any inconsistencies between the proposed plan and adopted regional plans as they may relate to environmental issues. (See CEQA Guidelines § 15125(d).) For example, cities and counties should evaluate any inconsistencies between the proposed general plan and the regional sustainable communities strategy. The

baseline or other cross-referenced component of the EIR must also describe the changes that would occur to the community as a result of the [changing climate](#).

When a new general plan or a revision is being considered, the EIR must evaluate the proposed plans or revision's effects on both the existing physical environment and the environment envisioned by any adopted plan. (*Environmental Planning and Information Council v. County of El Dorado* (1982) 131 Cal.App.3d 354; *see also* CEQA Guidelines § 15125(e).) When a city or county proposes to amend a general plan, the environmental analysis should focus on the changes proposed in the amendment. Reanalysis of unchanged portions of the general plan is not required. (*Black Property Owners Assn. v. City of Berkeley* (1994) 22 Cal. App. 4th 974.)

Level of Detail in Analysis

The general plan EIR need not be as detailed as an EIR for the specific projects that will follow. (CEQA Guidelines §15146.) Its level of detail should reflect the level contained in the plan or plan element being considered. (*Rio Vista Farm Bureau Center v. County of Solano* (1992) 5 Cal.App.4th 351.) At the same time, however, the lead agency cannot defer to later tiered EIRs its analysis of any significant effect of the general plan. (*Stanislaus Natural Heritage Project, Sierra Club v. County of Stanislaus* (1996) 48 Cal.App.4th 182.) "With a good and detailed analysis of the [general plan], many subsequent activities could be found to be within the scope of the project described in the [general plan] EIR, and no further environmental documents would be required." (CEQA Guidelines § 15168(c)(5); *see also id.* at § 15183.3 (streamlining for infill projects).)

Mitigation

The EIR must identify mitigation measures and alternatives to avoid or minimize potential impacts, to the extent feasible. The general plan EIR is a particularly useful tool for identifying measures to mitigate the cumulative effects of new development. For example, a general plan might anticipate a significant increase in industrial employment in the community. If this proposal would lead to increased automobile commuting, the EIR could identify measures to reduce peak-hour traffic volumes, such as new transit routes or improved bicycle facilities. Where other agencies are responsible for mitigating the effects of the general plan, they should be identified in the EIR. Pursuant to Public Resources Code

§21081.6, the general plan must incorporate the approved mitigation measures identified in the EIR into its policies and plan proposals.

Alternatives

Several alternative draft plans are typically considered en route to adopting a general plan. Similarly, the EIR for the plan must describe a reasonable range of alternatives and analyze each of their effects. (CEQA Guidelines §15126.6.) Consistent with CEQA, the alternative plans should share most of the same objectives. Each of the alternatives should avoid or lessen one or more of the significant effects identified as resulting from the proposed plan. A reasonable range of alternatives would typically include different levels of density and compactness, as well as different locations and types of uses for future development. In a situation where the proposal is yet to be selected from among the alternatives, the competing alternatives should not all have the same level of impacts. This discussion of alternatives will enable environmental considerations to influence the ultimate design of the general plan.

The EIR must also evaluate the “no project” alternative. This would describe what physical changes might reasonably be expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the new or revised general plan were not adopted, based on the existing general plan (if any) and available infrastructure and services. This “no project” alternative must also evaluate how the changing environment, such as through climate change and drought, may affect the community if a new or revised general plan were not adopted.

Cumulative Impacts

The EIR must analyze the cumulative effects of the plan’s policies and proposals on the environment. For example, a planning policy authorizing rural residential uses in or near wild lands could cumulatively increase the potential severity of fire damage by hindering wildfire suppression efforts. Increasing reliance on automobile use in a general plan, through dispersed land uses for example, could contribute not only to cumulative air quality impacts in non-attainment areas and increased energy use, but also indirect effects such as increased water pollution (due to runoff from roads) and adverse effects to public health (due to decreased physical activity). When cumulative impacts are adequately addressed in a

general plan EIR, further analysis should not be needed at the project level. (See CEQA Guidelines § 15183(j).)

Growth Inducing Impacts

Growth-inducing impacts must also be analyzed. These may include any policies, proposals, and programs of the general plan likely to stimulate community growth and development. Examples include plans for street and highway improvements in undeveloped areas, a proposal for wastewater treatment plant expansion, and proposals for the expansion of employment in basic industries, any of which is likely to increase pressure for or facilitate residential and other development.

Irreversible Environmental Changes

The environmental analysis for a general plan must address any irreversible environmental changes. For example, once general plan policies designate certain areas for development, such areas are unlikely to ever be returned to a natural condition. Thus, the environmental effects of locking in certain uses for the foreseeable future must be analyzed in a general plan's environmental analysis. "Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified." (See Public

Resources Code § 21100.1; *see also id.* at § 21000(a) ("maintenance of a quality environment for the people of this state now and in the future is a matter of statewide concern") (emphasis added).)

Timing

The purpose of preparing an environmental analysis is not only to inform decision-makers and the public of a general plan's potential adverse environmental impacts, but also to allow environmental considerations to influence the design of the plan itself. To accomplish this purpose, the CEQA analysis should be prepared in coordination with the development of the general plan. The following table suggests several points of intersection between the CEQA and general plan update process.

Careful coordination between the CEQA process and the general plan process can also minimize unnecessary duplication of work.

General Plan Tasks	Steps in EIR Process
Work plan	Notice of Preparation
Visioning, Goals Development	Project Description Project Objectives
Collect and analyze data	Initial Study Scoping
Refine goals	Environmental Analysis
Alternatives Analysis	Alternatives Analysis
Identify a preferred alternative	Release draft EIR
Further Refinement of Goals	Responses to Comments
Plan Adoption	Final EIR, MMRP, Findings and SOC

PUBLIC REVIEW OF THE EIR AND CONSULTATION

Both CEQA and the Government Code require extensive consultation and the public and other public agencies during the development of a general plan. For example, Government Code section 65352 requires consultation with, among others:

- A city or county, within or abutting the area covered by the proposal,

- Any special district that may be significantly affected by the proposed action
- An elementary, high school, or unified school district within the area covered by the proposed action.
- The local agency formation commission.
- An areawide planning agency whose operations may be significantly affected by the proposed action
- A federal agency if its operations or lands within its jurisdiction may be significantly affected by the proposed action
- The military
- Public water systems
- The Bay Area Air Quality Management District for a proposed action within the boundaries of the district
- A California Native American tribe that is on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission, with traditional lands located within the city or county's jurisdiction.
- The Central Valley Flood Protection Board for a proposed action within the boundaries of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Drainage District.

In addition, the city or county must provide for at least one scoping meeting to receive input on the scope and content of the draft EIR. (Public Resources Code §21083.9.) Refer to Chapter 3: Public Engagement and Outreach, for methods to seek meaningful community input.

Adoption and Certification

Before adopting the general plan, element, or revision for which the EIR was prepared, the city council or county board of supervisors must consider the final EIR, certify its adequacy, and make explicit findings explaining how the significant environmental effects identified in the EIR have been or should be mitigated or explain why mitigation measures and identified alternatives are not feasible. (CEQA Guidelines §15091.) The city or county cannot approve the general plan unless the approved plan will not result in a significant effect on the environment or, more commonly, the city or county has eliminated or substantially lessened all significant effects where feasible and made a written statement of overriding considerations explaining the reasons why any remaining unavoidable significant effects are acceptable. (CEQA Guidelines §15093.) The jurisdiction must also adopt a mitigation monitoring or reporting program to ensure that the mitigation incorporated into the plan in accordance with the EIR will be implemented.

Program and Master EIRs

In order to minimize the need to reanalyze a series of projects related to the general plan, CEQA and the state CEQA Guidelines encourage using a general plan EIR to address subsequent discretionary projects, such as adopting zoning ordinances and approving specific capital improvement or development projects that are consistent with the general plan. By using a programmatic approach, the environmental review for a subsequent project can be limited to those project-specific significant effects that either were not examined or not examined fully in the general plan EIR.

Later environmental analysis for more specific actions can use analysis from the general plan EIR in several ways. The following paragraphs present a brief discussion of program EIRs, master EIRs, streamlining under Public Resources Code sections 21083.3 and 21094.5, and the use of certain statutory exemptions.

Program EIRs

The program EIR prepared for a general plan examines broad policy alternatives, considers the cumulative effects and alternatives to later individual activities where known, and contains plan-level mitigation measures. Later activities that have been described adequately under the program EIR will not require additional environmental documents. (CEQA Guidelines § 15168(c)(2).) When necessary, new environmental documents, such as a subsequent or supplemental EIR or a negative declaration, will focus on the project-specific impacts of later activities, filling in the information and analysis missing from the program EIR. (*Id.* at subd. (d).)

The “project” being examined in the program EIR is the general plan, element, or revision. The CEQA Guidelines recommend that program EIRs deal with the potential effects of a general plan, element, or revision “as specifically and comprehensively as possible.” The program EIR’s level of detail should be commensurate with the level of detail contained in the general plan element. (*See Rio Vista Farm Bureau Center v. County of Solano* (1992) 5 Cal.App.4th 351.)

A program EIR should pay particular attention to the following EIR components:

- The significant environmental effects, including cumulative effects of anticipated later activities under the plan or element.
- Mitigation measures, including plan-wide measures.
- Alternatives to the basic policy considerations set forth by the plan or element.

When evaluating a later activity to determine whether it is eligible for consideration under a program EIR, OPR suggests the following sequential approach.

First, the lead agency must determine whether the subsequent activity meets both of the following criteria:

1. It is consistent with the plan or element for which the program EIR was certified. (A general plan amendment obviously would not qualify. (*See, Sierra Club v. County of Sonoma* (1992) 6 Cal.App.4th 1307).)

2. It incorporates the feasible mitigation measures and alternatives developed in the program EIR. (Additional mitigation measures and alternatives may also be applied when a subsequent or supplemental EIR is prepared.)

Second, the lead agency must evaluate the later activity and its location to determine whether the environmental effects of that activity were adequately described in the program EIR. If there are any new effects from the later activity, the lead agency must prepare an initial study to determine the significance of those effects. No subsequent EIR is necessary for a project that is essentially part of the "project" described by the general plan's program EIR unless:

1. The later project would propose substantial changes in the plan that were not described in the program EIR, requiring revisions to the program EIR due to the involvement of a new significant effect or a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified effect.
2. Substantial changes have occurred in the circumstances under which the general plan was undertaken, requiring revisions to the program EIR due to the involvement of a new significant effect or a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified effect.
3. New information of substantial importance that was not known and could not have been known at the time the program EIR was certified indicates that significant effects were not adequately analyzed or that mitigation measures or alternatives should be revisited.

(See CEQA Guidelines §§ 15162, 15168(c).) If no subsequent EIR is required, the project is deemed to be within the scope of the program EIR and no additional environmental document would be required.

Case law provides good examples of when further environmental review may, or may not, be required. For example, the City of San Diego's redevelopment agency was not required to conduct additional environmental review of a hotel project because it had previously prepared a program EIR addressing development in its downtown. (*See Citizens for Responsible Equitable Env't'l Dev. v. San Diego R.A.* (2005) 134 Cal.App.4th 598.) On the other hand, additional environmental review was required for a proposal to use land that had previously been identified as agricultural for mining purposes because that new use was

not “within the scope” of the program EIR. (*See Sierra Club v. County of Sonoma* (1992) 6 Cal.App.4th 1307.)

If a subsequent EIR must be prepared, it is subject to the standard EIR content requirements (i.e., project description, environmental setting, significant effects, mitigation measures, etc.). However, the subsequent EIR need not duplicate information and analysis that is already included in the program EIR. This may include such areas as environmental setting, project alternatives, and cumulative impacts. Pertinent discussions from the program EIR, to the extent that it examines regional influences, secondary effects, cumulative effects, broad alternatives, and other factors that apply to the later project, should be incorporated by reference into the subsequent EIR. (CEQA Guidelines § 15168(d).)

Master EIRs

Another option for conducting programmatic review is to prepare and certify a master EIR (MEIR). (Public Resources Code §21157, et seq. and CEQA Guidelines §15175, et seq.) The MEIR is intended to be the foundation for analyzing the environmental effects of subsequent projects. Those projects that have been described in some detail in the MEIR may avoid the need for a later EIR or negative declaration. Other projects will need to be analyzed in a focused EIR that examines project-specific impacts while referencing the MEIR’s analysis of cumulative and growth-inducing impacts.

Section 15178 of the CEQA Guidelines specifically allows later projects that are consistent with the land use designations and the permissible densities and intensities of use described in the general plan to proceed under the MEIR. This avoids the need for another EIR or negative declaration. The OPR publication *Focusing on Master EIRs* offers detailed technical information about using MEIRs.

In practice, an MEIR is similar to a program EIR. However, there are at least three differences worth noting.

- First, the requirements for preparing and applying an MEIR and its associated focused EIRs are described in detail in both statute and the CEQA Guidelines. The program EIR is less specifically described in the CEQA Guidelines.
- Second, once a subsequent project is determined to be within the scope of the MEIR, a focused EIR must be prepared whenever it can be fairly argued on the basis of

substantial evidence in the record that the project may have a significant effect, even if evidence exists to the contrary.

- Third, MEIRs must be re-examined and, if necessary, supplemented at least once every five years. This ensures that the analysis contained in an MEIR remains topical.

Streamlining in Public Resources Code Section 21083.3

Public Resources Code section 21083.3 contains a specific limitation on CEQA for projects that are consistent with a general plan. When an EIR has been certified for a general plan, the CEQA analysis of later projects can be limited to those significant effects that “are peculiar to the project” and that either were not addressed as significant effects in the plan’s EIR or that new information shows will be more significant than when the plan’s EIR was certified. The requirements of this option are detailed in CEQA Guidelines §15183.

Streamlining for Infill Projects in Public Resources Code Section 21094.5

Similar to the provision described above, section 21094.5 of the Public Resources Code limits the CEQA analysis of infill projects. Specific rules on this provision are contained in Section 15183.3 and Appendix M of the CEQA Guidelines. As a general matter, section 21094.5 allows a lead agency a large degree of flexibility in using existing environmental documents to approve later projects. Because the primary criteria for eligibility is proximity to transit, cities can maximize the streamlining benefit of a general plan EIR by carefully analyzing residential, commercial and school uses in transit corridors.

Comparing Existing Streamlining Mechanisms

	Program EIRs	Master EIRs	Section 21083.3	Streamlining Under Section 21094.5
Time Limit on Prior EIR	None	5 Years	None	None
Plan Consistency	General Plan and	Silent	Requires	Project may

	zoning consistency not explicitly required, but if project is not consistent, it may not be "within the scope" of the PEIR.		consistency with General Plan and Zoning	include general plan amendments or zoning variances, provided that new effects would need to be analyzed
Project-Level Description	Not required, but a PEIR "will be most helpful in dealing with subsequent activities if it deals with the effects of the program as specifically and comprehensively as possible."	Projects relying on the Master EIR must have been specifically identified	Not required in general plan or zoning EIR	Not required in EIR for a planning level decision
Project Contribution to Significant Effects	Analysis does not need to be repeated at the project level <i>if the project is "within the scope" of the PEIR.</i>	Analysis does not need not be repeated at the project level	Analysis does not need not be repeated at the project level	Analysis does not need not be repeated at the project level
Document Containing Programmatic Analysis	An EIR prepared for a program, plan, policy or ordinance	A Master EIR for specified projects	An EIR for a comprehensive general plan amendment or zoning code	An EIR for a planning level decision, as well as any supplements or addenda thereto

Effect of Development Standards	Can be used as thresholds of significance in an analysis, but not conclusively	Can be used as thresholds of significance in an analysis, but not conclusively	Can be used to address peculiar effects of the project, only if adopted by a city or county with a finding that the standard will substantially mitigate the effects of future projects	Can be used to address either new specific effects or effects that are more significant than previously analyzed, provided the finding is made at project approval

Integrating Annual Reporting with Mitigation Monitoring and Implementation

When a general plan is enacted or amended based upon an EIR or a mitigated negative declaration, the city council or board of supervisors must also adopt a reporting or monitoring program for ensuring compliance with the adopted mitigation measures (Public Resources Code §21081.6). The city or county should coordinate general plan policies and environmental mitigation measures during the planning process so that the mitigation measures will be reflected in the plan policies and those policies realistically can be implemented.

The city or county must adopt a specific program that will enable it to track compliance with the mitigation measures. One approach is to use the yearly “state of the plan” report prepared for the city council or board of supervisors pursuant to §65400(b) as the reporting program for a new general plan. See OPR’s publication *Tracking Mitigation Measures Under AB 3180* for more information about designing a mitigation monitoring program.

Transportation information resulting from the mitigation monitoring program must be submitted to the local transportation planning agency and to Caltrans (CEQA Guidelines §15206).

A general plan can be measured by how well its objectives, policies, and programs are implemented. The same is true for the mitigation measures identified in the plan's EIR. When drafting mitigation measures, consider how they can be reflected in plan objectives, policies, and programs and how they will be implemented. The mitigation measures should be an integral part of the plan, not an afterthought.

Appendix A: Model Policies and Examples

- [Land Use](#)
- [Circulation](#)
- [Housing](#)
- [Conservation](#)
- [Open Space](#)
- [Safety](#)
- [Noise](#)
- [Healthy Communities](#)
- [Social Equity, EJ, and Community Resilience](#)

Land-Use Planning

[Design for Sustainability and Stability](#)

[Provide for New Development](#)

[Create Economically Vibrant Communities](#)

[Improve Community Life](#)

Design for Sustainability and Stability

Goal : Accommodate the development of a mix of land uses that meet the diverse needs of residents and businesses, with places to live, work, shop, be entertained and culturally enriched, engage in healthy lifestyles, and engage with one’s neighbors and friends. (Hybrid from Sacramento, Pasadena, and La Habra)

Objective 1 Regulate and Optimize Density

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Regulate the levels of building intensity and population density consistent with the designations established by the Land Use Diagram. Within these designations, cumulative development shall not exceed *(insert number)* additional persons *(or housing units)* and *(insert number)* additional employees *(or non-residential building square feet)* by *(insert year)*.
(Sacramento, La Habra)
- Review the General Plan’s residential and commercial capacities every five years and modify, as necessary, to reflect development that has occurred, its impacts, evolving market and economic conditions, and consistency with community values.
(Pasadena)

- Allocate sufficient land at densities sufficient to support the development of businesses offering jobs matched to the education and skills of the city's residents and housing affordable to employees of local businesses, thereby reducing commutes to and from outside of the community.
(La Habra)

Avoid the overconcentration of uses and facilities in any neighborhood or district where their intensities, operations, and/or traffic could adversely impact the character, safety, health, and quality of life.
(Pasadena)

Objective 2 Enhance areas at the local level to increase livability and bolster local economy while reducing transit

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Provide for and encourage the development of a broad range of uses in the city's commercial centers and corridors that reduce the need to travel to adjoining communities and capture a greater share of local spending.
(La Habra)
- Require that development is located and designed to assure compatibility among land uses and districts.
(La Habra)
- Encourage development of local, citywide, and regional mixed-use centers that address different community needs and market sectors, and complement and are well-integrated with surrounding neighborhoods.
(Sacramento)
- Facilitate the redevelopment of the city's auto-oriented commercial corridors and suburban centers to create vibrant, mixed-use boulevards by clustering higher density, pedestrian-oriented mixed use on larger parcels at key intersections, while re-using intervening parcels for housing mixed with neighborhood-oriented commercial services and/or public plazas.
(Sacramento, La Habra)
- Support uses that meet daily needs such as grocery stores, local-serving restaurants, and other businesses, activities, and community-supportive facilities within walking or biking distance of residences to reduce the frequency and length of vehicle trips.
(La Habra)

Objective 3 Incorporate existing buildings into community design

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Prevent deteriorating conditions in areas of the city with buildings that are aging and not properly maintained through public and private conservation and rehabilitation programs.

(La Habra)

- Encourage the adaptive re-use and application of green technologies of existing buildings as a preference for demolition and replacement to retain the structure's embodied energy, increase energy efficiency, and reduce waste.

(Sacramento, and Rialto, modified)

Provide for New Development

Goal: Support development projects that provide a diversity of urban and suburban neighborhood opportunities. Ensure that new residential growth areas include neighborhoods that provide a mix of residential types and densities, and appropriate transitional features integrating the area with adjacent existing neighborhoods and development.
(Fresno, Sacramento, Citrus Heights)

Objective 1: Plan new development that is high-quality and well-integrated into existing cities and communities

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Provide opportunities for interested and affected parties to have input in proposed planning activities as early as possible.
(Citrus Heights)
- Coordinate the development of capital facilities and infrastructure with the timing of growth to ensure adequate and high levels of services for existing and new development.
(Pasadena modified)
- Provide for a diversity and variation of building types, densities, and scales of development in order to reinforce the identity of individual neighborhoods, foster a variety of market-based options for living and working to suit a large range of income levels, and further affordable housing opportunities.
(Fresno)
- Require that new development and reconstruction comply with the California Green Buildings Standards Code with amendments and update periodically to reflect future amendments.
(La Habra)
- Require that the scale and massing of new development in higher-density centers and corridors provide appropriate transitions in building height and bulk and are sensitive to the physical and visual character of adjoining lower-density neighborhoods.
(Sacramento, Pasadena)
- Require that buildings are designed as a high-quality, long-term addition to the City's urban fabric; exterior design and buildings shall exhibit permanence and quality, minimize maintenance concerns, and extend the life of the building.
(Pasadena)

Objective 2: Promote compact development patterns, mixed-use, and higher densities that use land efficiently; reduce automobile dependence and pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, and facilitate walking, bicycling, and transit use, including through mixed-use corridors and activity centers. (Sacramento, Fresno)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Target growth and new construction in infill areas and away from the city's residential neighborhoods and open spaces by redeveloping underutilized commercial and industrial properties.
(Pasadena)
- Require that new neighborhoods be designed to locate all housing within ½ mile of a central gathering place that incorporates public spaces, shopping areas, access to transit, and/or community-supportive facilities and services
(Sacramento)
- Encourage the consolidation of small parcels, joint public-private partnerships, and land clearance and re-sale to facilitate the revitalization of underused and obsolete commercial and industrial properties.
(La Habra)
- Limit, to the extent feasible, the wasteful and inefficient conversion of open space to urban uses and place a high priority on acquiring and preserving open space lands for recreation, habitat protection and enhancement, flood hazard management, public safety, water and agricultural resources protection, and overall community benefit.
(Sacramento)

Objective 3: Incorporate practices that preserve aesthetics and environments simultaneously

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Encourage the renovation, infill, and redevelopment of existing suburban centers that reduces the visual prominence of parking lots, makes the centers more pedestrian friendly, reduces visual clutter associated with signage, and enhances the definition and character of the street frontage and associates streetscape.
(Sacramento)
- Promote and, where appropriate, require sustainable building practices that incorporate a “whole systems” approach for design and construction that consume less energy, water, and other non-renewable resources, facilitate natural ventilation, effectively use daylight, and are healthy, safe, comfortable, and durable.
(Sacramento, Long Beach, and San Diego County)
- Encourage the strategic selection of street tree species to enhance neighborhood character and identity and preserve the health and diversity of the urban forest.
(Sacramento)

Create Economically Vibrant Communities

Goal: Foster a robust local economy that provides high-quality employment for citizens and attracts stable businesses.

Objective: Use smart planning to create a favorable economic environment

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Explore increasing the amount of land properly zoned, consistent with the General Plan, and ready to be expeditiously developed, redeveloped, and/or revitalized for economic development and job creation purposes.
(Fresno)
- Ensure that the city has appropriate resources in place to implement its economic development strategy and work in close coordination with other public agencies, private entities, the non-profit sector, and multi-cultural communities to coordinate economic development efforts on a region-wide basis.
(Fresno)
- Prioritize the provision of necessary major street infrastructure and utility capacities for properly zoned-land, consistent with the General Plan, so this land can be developed in a timely manner to support economic development.
(Fresno)
- Modify and monitor zoning codes to create economic incentives for more intensified forms of land use on previously developed but underutilized parcels.
(La Habra)
- Promote, educate, and market the benefits of a “buy local” campaign.
(Fresno)
- Support the development of locally-grown and based retail businesses as an alternative to national chain brands.
(Pasadena)

Objective 2: Ensure fair financial management

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Require new residential and commercial development to pay its fair and proportional share of needed community improvements through impact fees, assessment districts, and other mechanisms.
(Fresno)

- Periodically conduct comprehensive fee studies to determine whether impact fees fully account for the recovery of costs, consistent with applicable law.
(Fresno)
- Continue to implement responsible financial management practices.
(Fresno)

Objective 3: Attract and retain long-term, economically sustainable businesses. (Sacramento)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Encourage a balance between job type, the workforce, and housing development to reduce the negative impacts of long commutes and provide a range of employment opportunities for all city residents.
(Sacramento)
- Explore and identify target industries with well-paying occupations that match or can enhance the skill base and training capacity of local residents.
(La Habra)
- Establish a list of “ready-to-go” or “shovel-ready” sites in consultation with property owners, and provide the list to interested developers and businesses seeking sites in the city.
(Fresno)
- Cultivate an entrepreneurial and academic environment that fosters innovation.
(Pasadena)
- Promote the local workforce as a marketable resource for job placement companies serving the area and target industries.
(La Habra)
- Provide incentives to existing small and startup businesses, including minority- and women-owned businesses, to facilitate their expansion and job creation.
(Sacramento)
- Work with universities, the local chamber of commerce, and other groups to encourage businesses working with cutting-edge technology to locate in the city.
(Sacramento)

Objective 4: Promote the development and retention of a skilled workforce

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Reduce barriers to gainful employment such as lack of public transportation, training, job information, and child care.

(Pasadena)

- Work with local organizations in developing links between public and private providers of primary, secondary, and post-secondary education and with local businesses and industries to develop and promote educational programs relevant to the needs of the local economy.

(Sacramento)

- Work to improve the quality of life in the city to retain existing skilled workers and attract skilled workers from beyond the region.

(Sacramento)

- Create a program to provide incentives for local businesses to offer internship, mentoring, and apprenticeship programs to high school and college students in partnership with local educational institutions.

(Fresno modified)

Improve Community Life

Goal: Provide services to promote the health, safety, and well-being of all residents.

Objective 1: Provide a diversity of uses and services supporting the city's residents such as facilities for governance, public safety, seniors and youth, community gatherings, and comparable activities. (La Habra)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Work with external agencies and non-profit organizations to encourage the provision of services and facilities not subject to city jurisdiction, such as public schools and quasi-public infrastructure.
(La Habra)
- Ensure that sufficient parks, open space, and trails are planned throughout the city to ensure adequate facilities are available to existing and future residents.
(Sacramento)
- Require higher-density urban neighborhoods and mixed-use districts to incorporate small public spaces and have broad tree-lined sidewalks furnished with appropriate pedestrian amenities providing comfortable and attractive settings for high levels of pedestrian activity.
(Sacramento)
- Promote the co-location of parks, schools, police, police and fire facilities, health services, and other community facilities to support community interaction, enhance neighborhood identity, and leverage limited resources.
(Sacramento)

Objective 2: Strive to make communities social equable

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Ensure that parks and recreation facilities, community services, public facilities, and amenities are equitably distributed and accessible throughout the city.
(Pasadena, La Habra)
- Discourage features in residential development that tend to isolate residents from the sense of an integrated community, such as walls and gated single-family neighborhoods.
(Citrus Heights)
- Promote an equitable distribution of housing types for all income groups throughout the City and promote mixed-income developments rather than concentrations of below market-rate housing in certain areas.
(Sacramento)
- Promote the design of neighborhoods, centers, streets, and public spaces that enhances public safety and discourages crime by providing street-fronting uses (“eyes on the street”), adequate lighting and sight lines, and features that cultivate a sense of community ownership.
(Sacramento)
- Prohibit or control land uses that pose potential health and environmental hazards to residents of neighborhoods and districts.
(Pasadena)
- Promote the development of uses providing healthy and locally-grown food choices for the city’s residents (i.e., brick and mortar facilities, community gardens, and farmers markets).
(Pasadena)

Circulation

[Transportation Planning](#)

[Parking](#)

[Public Transit](#)

[Biking and Walking](#)

[Preserving Neighborhood Character](#)

[Economics and Transportation](#)

Transportation Planning

Goal: Develop a transportation system that meets the needs of all segments of the community, including those of residents, businesses, visitors, and the region. (San Pablo, Pasadena)

Objective: Design and operate city streets based on a “Complete Streets” concept that enables safe, comfortable, and attractive access and travel for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit users. (San Pablo)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Include “Complete Streets” considerations in the design of all circulation improvement projects. These new design considerations include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Landscaping (trees, medians, key intersections and gateways) that uses drought-resistant plant species, whenever possible, to conserve water;
 - Minimized ingress and egress points, consolidated entries;
 - Public transit facilities and improvements;
 - Safety criteria such as lighting and traffic calming devices for residential streets;
 - Sign design (including commercial signs, street signs, entry signs, directional signs(
 - Street furniture;
 - Bus stop locations and sidewalk widening, as needed; and
 - On and off-street parking management
 (San Pablo)
- Encourage connectivity and accessibility to a mix of land uses that meet residents 'daily needs within walking distance. (Pasadena)
- Provide an ongoing review of emergency operations plans and provisions to ensure that the City’s program for emergency transportation services is coordinated with other local and regional jurisdictions and incorporates updated procedures and programs as appropriate. (Pasadena)
- Coordinate transportation options for major community and commercial events to increase transit access, ridesharing and bicycle access and parking options. (Pasadena)

Objective: Improve safety for all modes by developing and coordinating between the Police Department and the Transportation Department the implementation of traffic management, education and enforcement initiatives Increase options for walking and bicycling to recreate, shop and services while improving safety for all modes. (Pasadena)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Install traffic calming devices, such as signage, road bulbs (also called curb extensions), chicanes, raised crosswalks, and speed humps, as needed and appropriate in existing neighborhoods. (San Pablo)
- Manage traffic speeds on neighborhood streets to reduce cut-through traffic. (Pasadena)

- Continue to impose Trip Reduction Ordinance (TRO) requirements for regulated new development. (Pasadena)
- Expand the Traffic Management Center (TMC) capabilities to provide priority treatment and monitoring of transit vehicles and to provide additional traveler information services. (Pasadena)
- Continue to work with the Public Safety Commission in its review and recommendation of public right-of-way safety improvements. (San Pablo)
- Promote efficient use of existing transportation facilities through the implementation of transportation demand management concept (San Pablo)
- Establish travel demand management programs to reduce peak-hour traffic congestion and help reduce regional vehicle miles traveled (San Pablo, Pasadena)
- Support local and regional air quality, sustainability, and GHG emission reduction goals through management. (Pasadena)
- Continuously evaluate the operation of the City's transportation system to manage the speed of travel at or below the speed limit, manage queues at intersections and develop improvements to increase safety of all transportation services. (Pasadena)
- Implement traffic measures developed through the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP) to control the speed and volume of traffic to reduce traffic impacts in neighborhoods. (Pasadena)
- Promote greater linkages between land uses and transit, as well as non-vehicular modes of transportation to reduce vehicular trip related emissions. (Pasadena)
- Promote safe travel in neighborhoods and coordinate with the Pasadena Police Department to enforce traffic regulations with particular attention given to sensitive uses such as schools, senior centers, hospitals, community service facilities, and parks. (Pasadena)
- Limit the intrusion of commercial truck traffic on City streets, especially residential neighborhoods, by directing truck traffic to the city's designated truck routes and coordinating with the Pasadena Police Department to enforce related regulations on local streets.. (San Pablo, Pasadena)
- Collaborate with the business community to encourage truck deliveries to be made in off-peak hours especially in areas where nearby residents would be affected. This policy must be consistent with provisions of the City's noise ordinance. (Pasadena)
- Apply traffic management measures to manage vehicular speeds as a function of designated street type to ensure safe and orderly movement of all modes of travel. (Pasadena)

Parking

Goal: Foster practical parking solutions to serve community needs while avoiding excessive amounts of surface parking that disrupt the urban fabric of the city. (San Pablo)

Objective: Amend the Zoning Ordinance to establish “green” parking design standards that have multiple benefits, such as shared parking for mixed use projects, photovoltaic panels on parking structures to generate energy for parking lot lighting, landscaping and trees in surface parking, and pervious paving to improve groundwater recharge and promote innovative surface parking design that avoids the appearance of a “sea of asphalt” and reduces environmental impacts.

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Require parking to be provided behind buildings, wherever feasible (San Pablo)
- Promote the use of time, motion-sensing, and/or solar powered parking lot lights or security lights, wherever feasible (San Pablo)
- Establish specific standards for perimeter landscaping, including the type and coverage required along the edges of surface parking areas adjacent to streets (San Pablo)
- Require a minimum number of trees per parking stall in surface parking areas (e.g. 1 per 8 stalls for double-loaded bays) to provide shade, and reduce urban heat island effects (San Pablo)
- Separate pedestrian pathways from car lanes where possible (San Pablo)
- Promote the use of porous paving and a variety of drainage features according to the site (San Pablo)
- Restrict use of vacant lots as vehicle parking and outdoor storage of commercial equipment, construction equipment, and similar items unless screened from view from adjacent streets (San Pablo)
- Promote use of innovative parking technologies, such as parking lifts and automated parking. (San Pablo)
- Require convenient and accessible parking facilities for persons with disabilities, consistent with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. (San Pablo, Pasadena)
- Limit parking within the public right of way based upon considerations of safety, street width, visibility and access to properties (San Pablo)
- Enforce regulations that prohibit parking of commercial, recreational, and non-operable vehicles in residential areas, including the staging of taxi services. (Pasadena)
- Examine ways to maintain and better utilize existing private and public parking structures through shared parking opportunities and advanced traveler information services to direct parkers to available spaces. (Pasadena)
- Create “parking benefit assessment districts” to fund consolidated public parking where supported by local businesses (San Pablo)
- Continue to enforce parking regulations and prevent spillover of parking from commercial areas into residential neighborhoods (San Pablo, Pasadena)

Public Transit

Objective: Facilitate the use of public transportation in by making it more comfortable and convenient. (San Pablo, Pasadena)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Assess ways to improve availability of transit for underserved populations. (Pasadena)
- Implement a citywide car sharing system to support the Mobility Element objectives. (Pasadena)
- Continue coordination efforts with public transit providers to maintain transit service that is safe and efficient with convenient connections to high use and activity intersections in the city (San Pablo)
- Seek funding to enhance accessibility by increasing routes, frequency and hours of operation for the transit system throughout the community. (Pasadena)
- Recognize the distinctive transportation needs of the community and deliver appropriate transportation services developed through public outreach programs. (Pasadena)
- Work with public transit providers to upgrade selected bus-stops with advanced traveler information systems (ATIS) (San Pablo)
- Continue to strengthen the marketing and promotion of non-auto transportation to residents, employees and visitors. (Pasadena)
- Facilitate coordination between transit providers to improve seamless transit service. (Pasadena)
- Ensure predictable transit travel times by providing traffic signal system priority measures. (Pasadena)
- Promote safety at railroad crossings through the following measures, as necessary:
 - Improvements to pedestrian warning devices at existing railroad crossings; Zoning setback and height standards to maintain the visibility of warning devices and approaching trains; and
 - Rail safety awareness programs to educate the public about the hazards of at grade crossings.
 - Installation of additional warning signage and/or channelization;
 - Improvements to traffic signaling at intersections adjacent to crossings;
 - Prohibition of parking within 100 feet of crossings to improve the visibility of warning devices and approaching trains (San Pablo)

Biking and Walking

Goal: Develop a safe and comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian network to improve access and public health. (San Pablo, Pasadena)

Objective: Expand and maintain a safe and comprehensive bicycle system that connects the City's

neighborhoods to regional bicycle routes. (San Pablo, Pasadena)

Recommended Policies & Programs

Require the provision of bicycle parking and related facilities in new employment-generating development to facilitate multi-modal commute choices. (San Pablo)

Develop and maintain a comprehensive and integrated system of reduced stress bikeways and increase bicycle parking at destinations to promote bicycle riding as a mode of transportation. (Pasadena)

Ensure that secure and convenient bicycle parking at destinations. Explore bicycle share programs or any other bicycle programs that will provide greater access to bicycles for visitors and those that may not own a bicycle. (Pasadena)

Increase walking and bicycling to local destinations and regional transportation services by developing wayfinding signage for pedestrians and bicyclists. (Pasadena)

Adopt a Bicycle Master Plan to enhance bicycle circulation and planning and Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. (San Pablo)

Use brightly-colored paint or a one-foot buffer strip along bicycle routes to provide a visual signal to drivers to watch out for bicyclists and nurture a “share the lane” ethic. Start with areas of town where automobile-bicycle collisions have occurred in the past, based on data from the Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System maintained by the California Highway Patrol. (San Pablo)

Develop measures to reduce conflict areas for bicyclist such as driveways and right turn lanes. (Pasadena)

Amend an existing transportation impact fee to include pedestrian and bicycle improvements. (Pasadena)

Objective: Increase the viability of walking as a method of transportation

Recommended Policies & Programs

Complete and enhance the pedestrian network with an interconnected system of walkways, continuous sidewalks on both sides of the street, and pedestrian crossings. (San Pablo)

Support neighborhood walk-to-school efforts. (Pasadena)

To maintain walkability and pedestrian safety, consider reducing curb-to-curb road widths and employing roadway design features such as islands, pedestrian refuges, and pedestrian count-down signal. (San Pablo)

Provide pedestrian facilities that are accessible to persons with disabilities and ensure that roadway improvement projects address accessibility and universal design concept. (San Pablo)

In mixed-use areas or other areas with high pedestrian traffic, provide mid-block pedestrian crossings, where feasible, to create more direct walking routes and slow vehicle speeds (San Pablo)

Preserving Neighborhood Character

Objective: Protect the character of local residential streets. (San Pablo)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Ensure that public right-of-way improvement designs are consistent with the character of each neighborhood. (San Pablo, Pasadena)
- Minimize street and intersection widening to facilitate pedestrian crossings and protect historic resources and open space. (Pasadena)

Economics and Transportation

Objective: Maintain economic health and viability while making improvements to transportation infrastructure.

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Ensure that new development pays its fair share of the costs of new and improved transportation facilities. (San Pablo)
- Pursue funding opportunities such as grants, impact fees or fair share contributions from development to implement programs and projects that contribute to the City's Mobility Element objectives. (Pasadena)
- Emphasize transportation projects and programs that will contribute to a reduction in vehicles miles traveled per capita, while maintaining economic vitality and sustainability (Pasadena)
- Manage curb-space parking to support neighborhood protection and economic vitality. (Pasadena)

Housing

[Special Populations and Homelessness](#)

[Affordability](#)

[Housing and Neighborhoods](#)

[Infill Housing](#)

Special Populations and Homelessness

Objective: Support provision of housing to address the needs of the disabled, mentally ill, persons with substance problems, persons with HIV/AIDS, and other groups needing transitional and supportive housing. (Long Beach)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Support continued efforts to implement and expand the Continuum of Care program for homeless persons. Implement the feasibly components of *Within Our Reach: A Community Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness, Long Beach's 10-Year Plan Report*. (Long Beach)
- Encourage universal design of housing products and environments, making them usable by a wide range people with different physical and mental abilities. (Long Beach)
- Integrate and disperse special needs housing within the community and in close proximity to transit and public services. (Long Beach)
- Adopt a written reasonable accommodation ordinance to provide exception in zoning and land-use for housing for persons with disabilities, for development standards such as building setbacks and parking requirements. (City of Lindsay)

Affordability

Objective: Increase the availability of affordable housing.

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Where the City provides financial assistance, require the inclusion of affordable units. (Long Beach)
- Support programs and projects which link affordable housing with other community development goals and resources. (Long Beach)

- Utilize development agreements as a tool to achieve a mix of affordability levels in large-scale projects. (Long Beach)
- Expedite the processing of residential development proposals and permits and granting priority queuing to permit applications for affordable housing projects. (Simi Valley)
- Offer qualified low-income first-time homebuyers who wish to purchase a home a deferred payment second trust deed loan (no monthly payments required) up to \$50,000 per bedroom, not to exceed \$200,000. In exchange for the assistance, the homebuyer must comply with the resale/recapture provisions in the affordability covenant. The property may be a detached or an attached single-family home, a condominium, or a townhome. (Simi Valley)
- Assist eligible residents with up to two-thirds of the required security deposit, up to a maximum of \$1,200, for all qualified very low-income families seeking to secure a rental unit. Qualified applicants must put up the remaining third of the security deposit on their own. (Simi Valley)
- Convene a working group made up of building industry and affordable housing experts to explore new funding sources for affordable housing, such as former redevelopment (boomerang) fund. (City of Sacramento)
- Issue waivers for sewer and sanitation development fees for projects in which at least 1- percent of the units are affordable to very low-income households. (City of Sacramento)
- Conduct a seminar with affordable housing developers to discuss priority sites as well as to promote new development standards and programs that promote affordable housing. (City of Sacramento)

Housing and Neighborhoods

Objective: Plan and maintain housing with a view to creating safe and functional neighborhoods.

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Promote strong, on-site management of multi-family complexes to ensure the maintenance of housing and neighborhood quality. (Long Beach)
- Support the development of housing that is technology-friendly and designed to meet the housing needs of the emerging information and technology industry workforce. (Long Beach)
- Incorporate other community goals with the production, conservation, and protection of housing, including encouraging sustainable development, providing supportive services, increasing walkability and non-motorized forms of transportation, improving and maintaining public safety, and ensuring ongoing public participation efforts. (Santa Monica)
- Encourage and provide incentives for the development of housing in mixed-use zoning districts near transit opportunities. (Santa Monica)
- Ensure that architectural design of new housing development is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. (Santa Monica)

- Encourage residential projects to utilize a variety of housing types, unit clustering, and special construction techniques, where these will preserve natural topographic, landscape and scenic qualities. (Alameda County)
- Mandate that residential projects be sited, designed and landscaped to: ensure privacy and adequate light, air and ventilation to units and residential open space areas; provide adequate and usable private indoor and outdoor spaces; and ensure adequate visual and acoustical buffering and/or separation between residential units and adjoining nonresidential units and major transportation facilities. (Alameda County)
- Encourage institutions of higher education to build student, staff, and faculty housing to meet the needs of their students and employees. (Long Beach, California State University)

Infill Housing

Also see the [Infill Compendium](#).

Objective: Make use of existing and new policies to encourage compact development and infill.

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Continue to implement the Single Room Occupancy (SRO) ordinance, ensuring no net loss of Downtown SRO units and the construction of new SRO units in the City (City of Sacramento)
- Prepare a study recommending new financing options to provide infrastructure in infill areas. New sources of financing could include state and federal grants, the General Fund, the use of impact fees, bond measures and financing sources. (City of Sacramento)
- Encourage and facilitate transit-oriented development in key locations by maintaining a webpage with a map of sites in transit priority areas, near services and amenities for TCAC scoring and/or sites owned by the former redevelopment agency. (City of Sacramento)
- Revise County ordinances and fees to encourage development of secondary dwellings, and further promote secondary dwellings. For example, the County will consider revising road requirements and public facility fees for secondary dwellings or according to home size. (San Luis Obispo County)
- Explore ways to provide incentives for development of mixed use projects such as reduced or deferred fees and revised ordinance standards for mixed use. The County will consider the relationship between the amount of public benefit (such as reduced traffic and enhanced business viability) and proposed incentives. (San Luis Obispo County)
- Provide assistance for project design (e.g. site planning, engineering, and/or preliminary architectural services) and infrastructure improvements (e.g. cost-sharing and/or fee waivers) for: 1) infill housing development and/or redevelopment projects, especially when located in or near downtown; or 2) housing development projects that promote land or energy conservation. (City of Lindsay)

Conservation

[Biological Resources](#)

[Mineral Resources](#)

[Cultural Resources](#)

[Water Resources](#)

[Air Quality, Greenhouse Gases, and Energy](#)

[Agricultural Resources](#)

Biological Resources

Goal: Protect and enhance natural wildlife habitat outside of preserves as development occurs according to the underlying land use designation. (San Diego County)

Objective 1: Ensure wildlife populations have sufficient habitat, including habitat corridors, to maintain viable numbers. Particular attention shall be focused on retaining habitat areas that are contiguous with other existing natural areas and/or wildlife movement corridors. (Sacramento and Yolo County)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Identify and develop a coordinated biological preserve system that includes Pre-Approved Mitigation Areas, Biological Resource Core Areas, wildlife corridors, and linkages to allow wildlife to travel throughout their habitat ranges. Avoid adverse impacts to wildlife movement corridors and nursery sites (e.g., nest sites, dens, spawning areas, breeding ponds).
(Hybrid of San Diego County, San Diego County, and Yolo County)
- Require that impacts to species listed under the State or federal Endangered Species Acts, or species identified as special-status by the resource agencies, be avoided to the greatest feasible extent. If avoidance is not possible, fully mitigate impacts consistent with applicable local, State, and Federal requirements.
(Yolo County)
- Allow for appropriate public access to open space lands for recreation activities while protecting and restoring the natural ecosystem and minimizing environmental damage, as appropriate.

(Redwood City)

- Habitat preserved as a part of any mitigation requirements shall be preserved in perpetuity through deed restrictions, conservation easement restrictions, or other method to ensure that the habitat remains protected. All habitat mitigation must have a secure, ongoing funding source for operation and maintenance.

(Yolo County)

Objective 2: Preserve, maintain, and expand the number of trees in the urban forest, on both public and private property. (Redwood City)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Incorporate existing trees into development projects. Avoid adverse effects on health and longevity of native oaks or other significant trees through appropriate design measures and construction practices. When tree preservation is not possible, require appropriate tree replacement.
(City of Citrus Heights)
- Require the retention of trees of significance (such as heritage trees) by promoting stewardship of such trees and ensuring that the design of development projects provides for the retention of these trees wherever possible. Where tree removal cannot be avoided, the City shall require tree replacement or suitable mitigation
(Sacramento)

Objective 3: Protect and enhance streams, channels, seasonal and permanent marshland, wetlands, sloughs, riparian habitat and vernal pools in land planning and community design. (Yolo County)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Enhance fisheries habitat and restore access for native fishes in creeks.
(Redwood City)
- Promote floodplain management techniques that increase the area of naturally inundated floodplains and the frequency of inundated floodplain habitat, restore some natural flooding processes, river meanders, and widen riparian vegetation, where feasible.
(Yolo County)
- In conjunction with new development located along existing creeks and streams and where appropriate, incorporate daylighting for culverted portions or other bank naturalizing approaches for channeled sections as a means of creek and stream restoration.
(Redwood City)
- Prohibit development within a minimum of 100 feet from the top of banks for all lakes, perennial ponds, rivers, creeks, sloughs, and perennial streams. A larger setback is preferred. The setback will allow for fire

and flood protection, a natural riparian corridor (or wetland vegetation), a planned recreational trail where applicable, and vegetated landscape for stormwater to pass through before it enters the water body.

(Yolo County)

- Require development to preserve existing natural wetland areas and associated transitional riparian and upland buffers and retain opportunities for enhancement. Require development projects to mitigate any unavoidable losses of wetlands, including its habitat functions and values.

(San Diego County)

Mineral Resources

Objective: Encourage the production and conservation of mineral resources, balanced by the consideration of important social values, including recreation, water, wildlife, agriculture, aesthetics, flood control, and other environmental factors. (Yolo County)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Ensure that mineral extraction and reclamation operations are compatible with land uses both on-site and within the surrounding area and are performed in a manner that does not adversely affect the environment.
(Yolo County)
- Discourage development or the establishment of other incompatible land uses on or adjacent to areas classified or designated by the State as having important mineral resources (MRZ-2), as well as potential mineral lands identified by other government agencies. The potential for the extraction of substantial mineral resources from lands classified by the State as areas that contain mineral resources (MRZ-3) shall be considered by the County in making land use decisions.
(San Diego County)
- Require all mining projects to be conducted in accordance with a reclamation plan that meets the minimum reclamation standards required by the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act and associated regulations. Require the reclamation plan to include a phasing plan that provides for the completion of the surface mining on each segment of the mined lands so that the reclamation can be initiated at the earliest possible time on those portions of the mined lands that will not be subject to further disturbance by the surface mining operation.
(San Diego County)
- Permit plant nurseries, recreational open space, and other temporary uses in State-designated mineral resource sectors prior to and pending their development for mineral extraction.
(Rialto)

Cultural Resources

Objective: Encourage the preservation, protection and restoration of historic sites, properties and public works through the coordination of activities of the various City departments, non-profit organizations, and other associations concerning historic preservation. (City of Woodland)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Encourage the preservation and/or adaptive reuse of historic sites, structures, and landscapes as a means of protecting important historic resources as part of the discretionary application process, and encourage the preservation of historic structures identified during the ministerial application process
(San Diego County)
- Preserve important archaeological resources from loss or destruction and require development to include appropriate mitigation to protect the quality and integrity of these resources. Require development to avoid archeological resources whenever possible. If complete avoidance is not possible, require development to fully mitigate impacts to archaeological resources.
(San Diego County)
- After consultation with local Native American Tribes affected by the plan, determine which areas may be of cultural significance and determine how the areas can be preserved. Consultation with tribes should continue to occur as the general plan is implemented
(OPR)
- Promote the formation and maintenance of neighborhood organizations to foster neighborhood conservation programs, giving special attention to transitional areas.
(City of Woodland)

Water Resources

Objective 1: Manage groundwater resources on a sustainable yield basis that can provide water purveyors and individual users with reliable, high quality groundwater to serve existing and planned land uses during prolonged drought periods. (Yolo County)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Protect aquifer recharge features and areas of important aquifers from degradation of water quality and reduction of recharge
(City of Riverside)

Objective: Preserve and protect surface water through the use of careful and empirically-backed planning

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Maximize stormwater filtration and/or infiltration in areas that are not subject to high groundwater by maximizing the natural drainage patterns and the retention of natural vegetation and other pervious surfaces. This policy shall not apply in areas with high groundwater.
(San Diego County)

- Coordinate with water purveyors and water users to manage supplies to avoid long-term overdraft, water quality degradation, land subsidence and other potential problems.
(Yolo County)
- Conserve and where feasible create or restore areas that provide important water quality benefits such as riparian corridors, buffer zones, wetlands, undeveloped open space areas, levees, and drainage canals.
(Sacramento)

Objective: Require development to reduce the waste of potable water through use of efficient technology and conservation efforts that minimize the County's dependence on imported water and conserve groundwater resources. (San Diego County)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Support projects that provide reliable and sustainable surface water from a variety of energy efficient sources. Sources should be sufficient to serve existing and planned land uses in prolonged drought periods and protect natural resources and surface water flows
(Yolo County)
- The City shall require new development to protect the quality of water bodies and natural drainage systems through site design, source controls, storm water treatment, runoff reduction measures, best management practices (BMPs) and Low Impact Development (LID), and Hydromodification strategies consistent with permits
(Yolo County)
- Require all development to have an adequate water supply. Require significant discretionary projects to demonstrate adequate long-term and sustainable water supplies by preparing a verified water supply assessment.
(Yolo County)
- Require new development to demonstrate that adequate water is available before project approval and to fund its fair-share costs associated with the provision of water service.
(Redwood City)
- Require efficient irrigation systems and in new development and encourage the use of native plant species and non-invasive drought tolerant/low water use plants in landscaping.
(San Diego County)
- Require development to minimize the use of directly connected impervious surfaces and to retain stormwater run-off caused from the development footprint at or near the site of generation
(San Diego County)
- Continue to develop and implement water conservation programs in response to community input and to keep pace with changing technology
(Redwood City)

- Support the integrated management of surface and groundwater, stormwater treatment and use, the development of highly treated wastewater, and desalinization where feasible
(Yolo County)
- Develop a recommended native, low-water-use and drought-tolerant plant species list for use with open space and park development. Include this list in the landscape standards for private development
(City of Riverside)
- The City shall require all new development to contribute no net increase in stormwater runoff peak flows over existing conditions associated with a 100-year storm event.
(Sacramento County)

Air Quality, Greenhouse Gases, and Energy

Objective: Improve or maintain air quality for the promotion of population and environmental health.

Recommended Policies & Programs

- The City shall ensure that new development with sensitive uses located adjacent TAC sources minimizes potential health risks. The City shall require new development with sensitive uses located adjacent to TAC sources be designed with consideration of site and building orientation, location of trees, and incorporation of ventilation and filtration to lessen any potential health risks. In addition, the City shall require preparation of a health risk assessment.
(Sacramento)
- Require that development be located and designed to reduce vehicular trips (and associated air pollution) by utilizing compact regional and community-level development patterns while maintaining community character.
(San Diego County)
- Require projects that generate potentially significant levels of air pollutants and/or GHGs such as quarries, landfill operations, or large land development projects to incorporate renewable energy, and the best available control technologies and practices into the project design.
(San Diego County)

Objective Require design of residential subdivisions and nonresidential development through “green” and sustainable land development practices to conserve energy, water, open space, and natural resources.(San Diego County)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- The City shall reduce greenhouse gas emissions from new development by discouraging auto-dependent sprawl and dependence on the private automobile; promoting water conservation and recycling; promoting development that is compact, mixed use, pedestrian friendly, and transit-oriented; promoting energy-efficient building design and site planning; improving the jobs/housing ratio in each community; and other methods of reducing emissions.

(Sacramento)

- Retrofit existing buildings using low maintenance, durable building materials and high-efficiency energy systems and appliances
(Citrus Heights)
- Incorporate solar considerations into development regulations that allow existing and proposed buildings to use solar facilities. Encourage construction and subdivision design that allows the use of solar energy systems
(City of Riverside)
- Require that property setbacks and building massing of new construction located within existing developed areas maintain an envelope that maximizes solar access to the extent feasible.
(San Diego County)

Objective: Require all new building projects to incorporate energy-conserving design, construction, and operation techniques and features into all aspects of the project including buildings, roofs, pavement, and landscaping (Yolo County)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Require that new buildings be designed and constructed in accordance with “green building” programs that incorporate techniques and materials that maximize energy efficiency, incorporate the use of sustainable resources and recycled materials, and reduce emissions of GHGs and toxic air contaminants
(San Diego County)
- Encourage the use of building materials and methods that increase energy efficiency a minimum of 15 percent beyond State Title 24 standards for residential buildings and 20 percent beyond State Title 24 standards for commercial buildings
(Yolo County)
- Strongly encourage LEED certification or equivalent for all public, private and existing buildings and strongly encourage LEED Neighborhood Design (ND) certification or equivalent for other applicable projects, particularly within the Specific Plan areas.
(Yolo County)

Objective: Consider GHG reduction in aspects of city planning and work on lowering emissions

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Provide incentives such as expedited project review and entitlement processing for developers that maximize use of sustainable and low GHG land development practices in exceedance of State and local standards.
(San Diego County)

- Prepare, maintain, and implement a climate change action plan with a baseline inventory of GHG emissions from all sources; GHG emissions reduction targets and deadlines, and enforceable GHG emissions reduction measures.
(San Diego County)
- Promote and, as appropriate, develop standards for the retrofit of existing buildings to incorporate design elements, heating and cooling, water, energy, and other elements that improve their environmental sustainability and reduce GHG
(San Diego County)
- Require County operations and encourage private development to provide incentives (such as priority parking) for the use of low- and zero-emission vehicles and equipment to improve air quality and reduce GHG emissions.
(San Diego County)
- Analyze and research the feasibility of using small scale energy-producing technologies in public buildings, where feasible, including solar or wind energy and other green technologies.
(Redwood City)

Agricultural Resources

Objective: Strongly discourage the conversion of agricultural land for other uses. (Yolo County)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Prohibit land use activities that are not compatible within agriculturally designated areas
(Yolo County)
- Preserve agricultural lands using a variety of programs, including the Williamson Act, Farmland Preservation Zones (implemented through the Williamson Act), conservation easements, an Agricultural Lands Conversion Ordinance and the Right-to-Farm Ordinance.
(Yolo County, San Diego County)
- Prohibit redesignation from Agricultural or Open Space to another land use designation unless all of the following findings can be made:
 - A. There is a public need or net community benefit derived from the conversion of the land that outweighs the need to protect the land for long-term agricultural use.
 - B. There are no feasible alternative locations for the proposed project that are either designated for non-agricultural land uses or are less productive agricultural lands.
 - C. The use would not have a significant adverse effect on existing or potential agricultural activities on surrounding lands designated Agriculture.
 (Yolo County)
- Continue to mitigate at a ratio of no less than 1:1 the conversion of farmland and/or the conversion of land designated or zoned for agriculture, to other use.

(Yolo County)

Objective: Mitigate the impacts of urban areas on agricultural lands

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Requiring development to minimize potential conflicts with adjacent agricultural operations through the incorporation of adequate buffers, setbacks, and project design measures to protect surrounding agriculture and minimize conflicts.
(San Diego County, Riverside, Woodland)
- Discourage leapfrog development and development in peninsulas extending into agricultural lands to avoid adverse effects on agricultural operations.
(Woodland)
- Encourage the coordinated placement of agricultural conservation easements on land most threatened by development, particularly those lands located close to cities and unincorporated communities.
(Yolo County)

Objective: Promote the economic feasibility of agriculture and preserve traditional farmland while encouraging the development of urban agriculture.

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Establish an Agricultural District overlay designation to enhance and aggressively promote the distinctive agricultural and recreational character of unique regions within the County. Agricultural Districts shall be established in areas where agricultural business development and expansion (including industrial processing, commercial sales and agricultural tourism) will be encouraged through the use of targeted regulatory streamlining, financial incentives, specialized marketing efforts, and other programs as may be determined to be appropriate.
(Yolo County)
- Support the economic competitiveness of agriculture and encourage the diversification of potential sources of farm income, including value added products, agricultural tourism, roadside stands, organic farming, and farmers' markets.
(San Diego County)
- The City shall provide venues for farmer's markets, particularly in areas that lack access to fresh and healthy foods, and encourage serving locally grown and organic foods at City public facilities.
(City of Sacramento)

- The City shall promote urban agriculture by supporting community and rooftop gardens and recognize their value in providing fresh food in urban areas in addition to their recreational, community building, landscaping, and educational value (City of Sacramento)

Open Space

[Open Space for Habitat and Conservation](#)

[Open Space for Recreational Uses](#)

[Visual Resources](#)

Open Space for Habitat and Conservation

Goal: Expand and enhance an integrated network of open space to support recreation, natural resources, historic and tribal resources, habitat, water management, aesthetics, and other beneficial uses. (Yolo County)

Objective: Create a network of regional parks and open space corridors that highlight unique resources and recreational opportunities for a variety of users. (Yolo County)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Support the preservation of open space consistent with this General Plan, via acquisition of fee title or easement interest by land trusts, government agencies, and conservancies from willing landowners (Yolo County)
- Maintain habitat corridors to connect conservation areas such as parks and open space, protect biodiversity, accommodate wildlife movement and sustain ecosystems. (City of Citrus Heights)
- Provide for recreational trail rights-of-way along creek channels through development easements and agreements. (City of Citrus Heights)
- Establish an open space acquisition program that identifies acquisition area priorities based on capital costs, operation and maintenance costs, accessibility, needs, resource

preservation, ability to complete or enhance the existing open space linkage system and unique environmental features. (City of Riverside)

- Maximize public benefits in the reclamation of mineral extraction and sanitary landfill areas. (City of Rialto)
- Develop an integrated creekside trail system including low impact development strategies. (City of Citrus Heights)
- Promote acquisition and improvement of both developed and undeveloped park sites and provide recreation facilities necessary to meet or exceed the level of 3.55 parkland acres per 1,000 residents. (City of Citrus Heights)

Open Space for Recreational Uses

Objective: Develop a high-quality network of parks and recreational facilities that meet the needs of families, young adults, seniors, children, and disabled individuals. (City of Brea)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Work with the School District to provide joint-use facilities in areas where park and recreation facility deficits exist. Mitigate issues associated with school open space, such as vandalism, wear and tear, maintenance, and school expansion. (City of Rialto)
- Work with the Park District to seek locations for and the development of neighborhood parks in those neighborhoods which lack park acreage. (City of Citrus Heights)
- Develop, wherever possible, recreation facilities that have multi-use capabilities and high degree of adaptability to more intensive use or uses as recreation demand changes and/or population density increases. (City of Brea)
- Ensure that sports facilities for organized sports do not displace existing casual use facilities and parks. (City of Brea)
- Locate new local parks and recreation facilities near other community-oriented public facilities such as schools, libraries, and recreation centers where feasible, so that they may function as the “heart” of a community. (City of San Diego)

- Design parks that reflect community character and identity, incorporate local natural and cultural landscapes and features, and consider the surrounding land uses and urban form and cultural and historic resources. (City of San Diego)
- Connect public parks to trails and pathways and other pedestrian or bicycle networks where feasible to provide linkages and connectivity between recreational uses. (City of San Diego)

Visual Resources

Objective: Preserve visual resources located in the community

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Require the protection of scenic highways, corridors, regionally significant scenic vistas, and natural features, including prominent ridgelines, dominant landforms, reservoirs, and scenic landscapes. (San Diego County)
- Require development within visually sensitive areas to minimize visual impacts and to preserve unique or special visual features, particularly in rural areas, through the following:
 - Creative site planning
 - Integration of natural features into the project
 - Appropriate scale, materials, and design to complement the surrounding natural landscape
 - Minimal disturbance of topography
 - Clustering of development so as to preserve a balance of open space vistas, natural features, and community character.
 - Creation of contiguous open space networks(San Diego County)
- Protect undeveloped ridgelines and steep hillsides by maintaining semi-rural or rural designations on these areas. Recognize the value of ridgelines, hillsides and arroyos as significant natural and visual resource and strengthen their role as features which define the character of the City and its individual neighborhoods. (San Diego County, City of Riverside)
- Restrict outdoor light and glare from development projects in Semi-Rural and Rural Lands and designated rural communities to retain the quality of night skies by minimizing light pollution. (San Diego County)

- The City shall minimize obtrusive light by limiting outdoor lighting that is misdirected, excessive, or unnecessary. The City shall require that new development avoid the creation of incompatible glare through development design features. (City of Sacramento)
- Manage stands of mature trees, particularly native species, as unique and visual resources. (City of Brea)
- Require new development to place utilities underground and encourage “undergrounding” in existing development to maintain viewsheds, reduce hazards associated with hanging lines and utility poles, and to keep pace with current and future technologies. (Yolo County)

Safety

[Avoiding and Mitigating Natural Disasters](#)

[Emergency Preparedness and Prevention](#)

Avoiding and Mitigating Natural Disasters

Objective: Protect communities from natural disasters and hazards.

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Require geotechnical investigations by certified engineering geologist or other qualified professionals for all grading and construction projects subject to geologic hazards, including fault rupture, severe ground shaking, liquefaction, landslides, and collapsible or expansive soils. (Rialto)
- Promote the strengthening of planned utilities, the retrofit and rehabilitation of existing weak structures and lifeline utilities, and the relocation or strengthening of certain critical facilities to increase public safety and minimize potential damage from seismic and geologic hazards. (Rancho Cucamonga)
- Continue enforcement of the Development Guidelines to allow for prudent development and redevelopment of all properties located on slopes greater than 10 percent, and

continue to preserve as open space properties located on slopes greater than 30 percent. (Rancho Cucamonga)

- For properties located within designated 100-year flood zones, require the submittal of information prepared by qualified specialists which certifies compliance with development standards established for 100-year flood zones. (Rialto)
- Maintain structural and operational integrity of essential public facilities in the event of a flooding hazard, and locate new essential public facilities outside of flood hazard zones. (Rancho Cucamonga)
- For new development in the tsunami evacuation zone, require use of low-impact engineering techniques, such as elevating structures above projected water levels, to mitigate impacts to people and structures. (Pacifica)
- Site critical public facilities—including hospital and healthcare facilities, emergency shelters, police and fire stations, and emergency communications facilities—outside of the tsunami evacuation zone and 100-year flood plains. (Pacifica)
- Ensure that a defensible perimeter is maintained around residential located in high or very high wildfire hazards zones, as per Fire Department guidelines. (Rialto)
- Locate new buildings associated with new discretionary development outside of avalanche hazard areas. (Truckee)
- Continue to identify avalanche hazard areas, and to enforce special standards for construction in avalanche hazard areas. (Truckee)
- Use technology to improve safety at grade crossings while causing the least environmental harm, including Quiet Zone improvements such as upgraded and updated warning devices additional gate arms, extended and raised medians, improved signage, and coordinated traffic signals. (City of Riverside)

Emergency Preparedness and Prevention

Objective: Develop plans for dealing with emergencies, both community-wide and individual.

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Reduce the loss of life, property, and injuries incurred as a result of fires by offering and supporting comprehensive fire prevention, public education, and emergency response programs. (Rancho Cucamonga)
- Require adequate water supply and fire flow throughout the City to meet fire demand during times of peak domestic water demand through a cooperative relationship with the Water District. (Rancho Cucamonga)
- Minimize the risk of potential hazards associated with aircraft operations through the adoption and implementation of the Airport Protection Overlay Zone and the County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan. (City of Riverside)
- Ensure that new roadways are developed in accordance with standards the Municipal Code. In all new development, require adequate access to be provided for emergency vehicles, including adequate widths, turning radii, hard standing areas, and vertical clearance. (Pacifica)
- Develop a plan to widen critical rights-of way that do not provide adequate clearance for emergency vehicles. For areas that are not feasibly accessible to emergency vehicles, develop a contingency plan for reaching and evacuating people in need of treatment. (Pacifica)
- Identify and establish specific travel routes for the transport of hazardous materials and wastes, with key considerations being capacity to safely accommodate additional truck traffic, avoidance of residential areas, and use of interstate or State divided highways as preferred routes. (Rialto)
- Encourage and promote practices that will reduce the use of hazardous materials and the generation of hazardous waste at their source, recycle the remaining hazardous wastes for reuse, and treat those wastes which cannot be reduced at the source or recycled. (Rialto, Rancho Cucamonga)
- Continue to provide community programs that develop positive relationships between the Police Department and community members, such as the Area Commander Program and Crime Free Multi-Housing Program, which provide a safe and secure environment for the community to discuss gang-related issues and effective solutions to help reduce crime and provide a safer living environment. (Rialto)
- Continue to promote neighborhood watch programs for residential areas aimed at empowering neighborhoods to watch for and report any suspicious activity. (Rancho Cucamonga)

- Continue to provide high-quality patient care with cross-trained firefighter/paramedics and emergency medical technicians. Improve the level of patient care in the community through the development and implementation of innovative emergency medical service delivery strategies. (Rancho Cucamonga)
- Notify all developers, particularly those of multi-story or critical structures, of potential impacts resulting from winds, and require appropriate structural and design treatment. (Rancho Cucamonga, Santa Ana Winds)
- Create policies or procedures that provide flexibility regarding how prospective buyers and tenants of properties within the Airport Influence Area are informed of potential aircraft overflight impacts. (Rancho Cucamonga)
- Work to achieve consistency between General Plan land use and related policies and the Airport Comprehensive Land Use Plan, as is appropriate for the community. Measures may include restrictions on permitted land uses and development criteria, including height restrictions. (Redwood City)
- When an adequate model with sufficient local detail is available to project the impacts of sea level rise, take into account potential erosion caused by sea level rise by the year 2050 in the determination of developable area and the assessment of whether coastline-altering structures would be needed in the future to protect new development. (Pacifica)

Noise

Goal: Ensure that existing and planned land uses are compatible with the current and projected noise environment (Yolo County)

Objective: Minimize the impact of noise from transportation sources including roads, rail lines, and airports on nearby sensitive land uses. (Yolo County, County of San Diego)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Increase setbacks between noise generators and noise sensitive areas (County of San Diego)
- Employ technologies when appropriate that reduce noise generation (i.e. alternative pavement materials on roadways). (County of San Diego)
- For County road improvement projects, evaluate the proposed project against ambient noise levels to determine whether the project would increase ambient noise levels by more than three decibels. If so, apply the limits in the noise standards listed in Table xx

for noise sensitive land uses that may be affected by the increased noise levels. For federally-funded roadway construction projects, use the limits in the applicable FHWA standards (San Diego County)

- Avoid placing noise-sensitive land uses (e.g., residential uses, hospitals, assisted living facilities, group homes, schools, day care centers, etc.) within the high noise impact areas (over 65 dB CNEL) for (designated airports) in accordance with the County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (City of Riverside)
- Evaluate noise impacts on any sensitive receptors from frequent, high-noise events when considering whether to approve the development proposal, taking into account potential for sleep disturbance, undue annoyance, and interruption in conversation, to ensure that the proposed development is compatible within the context of its surroundings. (City of Sacramento)
- If the noise source is BART, then the outdoor noise exposure criterion should be 70 Ldn for future development, recognizing that BART noise is characterized by relatively few loud events.(City of El Centro)
- Orient buildings such that the noise sensitive portions of a project are shielded from noise sources. (County of San Diego)
- Incorporate noise considerations into the site plan review process, particularly with regard to parking and loading areas, ingress/egress points and refuse collection areas. (City of Riverside)
- Use sound-attenuating architectural design and building features. (County of San Diego)
- The City shall require construction projects anticipated to generate a significant amount of vibration to ensure acceptable interior vibration levels at nearby residential and commercial uses based on the current City or Federal Transit Administration (FTA) criteria. (RDR) The City shall require new residential and commercial projects located adjacent to major freeways, hard rail lines, or light rail lines to follow the FTA screening distance criteria (City of Sacramento)
- Use the Noise Compatibility Guidelines and the Noise Standards as a guide in determining the acceptability of exterior and interior noise for proposed land uses. (County of San Diego)
- Discourage the use of noise walls. In areas where the use of noise walls cannot be avoided, evaluate and require where feasible, a combination of walls and earthen berms

and require the use of vegetation or other visual screening methods to soften the visual appearance of the wall. (County of San Diego)

- Require an acoustical study to identify inappropriate noise level where development may directly result in any existing or future noise sensitive land uses being subject to noise levels equal to or greater than 60 CNEL and require mitigation for sensitive uses in compliance with the noise standards listed. (County of San Diego)
- The City shall require new development to include noise mitigation to assure acceptable interior noise levels appropriate to the land use type: 45 dBA Ldn for residential, transient lodgings, hospitals, nursing homes and other uses where people normally sleep; and 45 dBA L eq (peak hour) for office buildings and similar uses. (City of Sacramento)

Healthy Communities

Objective: Assist with conversion of liquor stores to other retail that better meets community needs. Give priority to locations within 4 mile of schools and parks. (San Pablo)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Subsidizing physical improvements (e.g., new freezers or coolers for perishables; new signs to change store names from “Liquor” to “Market”) (San Pablo)
- Assisting with business plan development to help owners find the right product fit for the community (San Pablo)
- Helping businesses with the process of registering to accept WIC and SNAP payments (San Pablo)
- Hosting a semi-annual “check-in” open house for store owners to trouble-shoot challenges associated with building maintenance, new products, or interactions with community members. (San Pablo)
- Enforce property maintenance and environmental design regulations for businesses, especially “corner stores,” including regulations for alcohol and tobacco advertisements. Within redevelopment project areas, assist store owners in identifying low-cost solutions to maintenance issues and provide financial assistance to qualifying businesses. (San Pablo)

- Continue to enforce provisions in the municipal code to manage alcoholic beverage sales locations and hold store owners accountable for litter, graffiti, assault, prostitution, or other public nuisance connected to their stores. (San Pablo)

Goal: Seek input from the County Department of Public Health and others on proposed development projects or other land use and transportation decisions to encourage that the decisions promote health. (Murrieta)

Objective: Minimize commutes and promote neighborhood cohesion

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Evaluate and make changes to the project review and permitting process to encourage and facilitate incorporation of universal, lifecycle design principles in new residential development, allowing community members to stay in their homes, and neighborhoods, longer and increasing community cohesion. (San Pablo)
- Establish travel demand management programs to reduce peak-hour traffic congestion and help reduce regional vehicle miles traveled. (San Pablo)

Goal: Improve public safety for all residents.

Objective: Use the built environment and city planning tools to deter crime, increase respect for neighbors and property, and improve the public perception of safety throughout the community. (San Pablo)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Orient building and windows to provide maximum surveillance of exterior areas, and locate entryways such that they are visible to adjacent neighbors or passersby. (San Pablo)
- Use landscaping such as low hedges and flowerbeds to identify points of entry and movement on property, and use signage and symbolic barriers to direct vehicular and pedestrian traffic. (San Pablo)
- Use thorny or thick plant materials in perimeter landscape areas to discourage cutting through parking areas, trampling vegetation, approaching ground floor windows or climbing fences and walls. (San Pablo)
- Make it easier to maintain property by recommending graffiti-resistant surface materials, vandal-proof lighting, and landscaping selected for durability and easy maintenance. (San Pablo)
- Promote activity in public areas throughout the day by coordinating shared uses of facilities (parking lots, parks, sports fields). (San Pablo)
- Ensure that minimum illumination standards for streetlights are met and, if necessary, update the standards to reflect best practices for safety lighting. (San Pablo)
- Encourage developers of larger commercial/office/business park/ industrial projects or projects that include sensitive uses (schools, senior centers, medical facilities, and larger residential projects) to prepare a health impact assessment (HIA) to determine potential impacts and to incorporate project-specific mitigation measures to avoid this risk. (Murrieta)

Encourage that new public facilities, schools, parks, recreational facilities, and commercial, office, and medical buildings provide drinking fountains.

Goal: Create and foster a sense of community among residents

Objective: Promote social activities for community residents and foster a sense of community

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Coordinate with local businesses, organizations, colleges, and the school district to support a year-round calendar of community events in Davis Park and other City parks. Events should be geared toward families and youth, and contain components of physical activity, healthy food, arts, and music. (San Pablo)
- Encourage a sense of ownership, community pride and civic respect as a means of improving the safety and image of the City. (San Pablo)
- Continue community policing and relationship- building programs, including educational and mentoring initiatives with schools. (San Pablo)
- Continue to involve residents in neighborhood improvement efforts, including issues concerning safety, neighborhood character, planning, and revitalization. (San Pablo)
- Create public plazas with seating, art, and play features near shopping and business districts. (Murrieta)
- Work with restaurants and cafes to create sidewalk outdoor seating areas to activate the sidewalk. (Murrieta)
- Allow and encourage residents to apply for street closure permits for neighborhood block parties. (Murrieta)
- Build an affordable, accessible, and flexible central gathering/meeting space that individuals and community groups can rent for a variety of social, cultural, educational, and civic purposes. (Murrieta)
- Encourage the development and display of public art to promote the history, heritage, and culture of the community. (Murrieta)
- Consider adopting a public art ordinance that 1) provides incentives for businesses to provide public art and 2) establishes a fee for commercial and industrial projects that do not wish to install public art. (Murrieta)

Objective: Help members on the margins of society integrate and become productive community members.

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Investigate the feasibility of establishing programs for formerly-incarcerated residents of the community to help them become involved in the community in a healthy and productive way. (San Pablo)
- Support organizations that provide substance abuse treatment services (San Pablo, Murrieta)
- Connect formerly-incarcerated persons to educational and job-training opportunities available at community college and elsewhere in the community. (San Pablo)

Objective: Develop policies to benefit residents economically

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Continue to encourage new businesses to give local residents preference in hiring decisions, and develop incentives to support this effort. (San Pablo)
- Enhance aesthetics and quality of the housing stock and remove blight by implementing policies and programs identified in the Housing Element. (San Pablo)
- Develop programs to attract and retain industries that can provide a living wage, provide health insurance benefits, and meet existing levels of workforce education. (Murrieta)
- Conduct a green technology business incubator feasibility study. (Murrieta)
- Engage existing business incubators and recruit green technology entrepreneurs to their facilities to develop a track record for green technology business development. (Murrieta)

Goal: Improve public health through implementation of programs and community design

Objective 1: Apply innovative and model best practices in the community health field. (Murrieta)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Collaborate with the County Department of Public Health’s efforts to systematically collect, track, and analyze community health and social, economic, and physical environmental data. (Murrieta)
- Seek opportunities to promote healthy lifestyles, activities, and food choices at City offices and City-organized events. (Murrieta)
- Incentivize health promotion groups to participate at City-sponsored events (i.e., waive booth fees at fairs, etc.). (Murrieta)
- Promote the health and well-being of City employees through health challenges (e.g., weight loss contests, stop smoking, lunchtime/worktime sponsored events, bike to work days), healthy food choices, and healthy work environments, when feasible. (Murrieta)
- Encourage fitness centers such as gyms, yoga and dance studios, martial arts centers, and rock climbing facilities to open. (Murrieta)
- Encourage safe, high quality, and affordable child care services for residents and workers in or near housing, transportation, and employment centers. (Murrieta)

Objective 2: Ensure residents have access to basic health services

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Establish relationships and collaborate with local health officials, planners, non- profit organizations, hospitals, local health clinics, and community groups to improve community health. (Murrieta)
- Work with local and regional health care agencies to promote preventive treatment and broad access to health care. (Murrieta)

- Work with existing organizations and agencies to support high-quality affordable and convenient access to a full range of traditional and alternative primary, preventive, emergency, and specialty health care options. (Murrieta)
- Partner with community groups encourage school-based health centers. (Murrieta)

Objective 3: Improve indoor air quality, both indoor and outdoor, as a public health measure

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Update and enforce tobacco control laws that pertain to location and retailing practices, smoking restrictions, and smoking-free home and workplace laws. (Murrieta)
- Disseminate information to tenants and property owners about indoor mold growth hazards, reduction, and prevention methods. (Murrieta)
- Encourage that the municipal vehicle fleet achieve the highest possible number of fuel-efficient and low emissions vehicles commercially available. (Murrieta)

Objective 4: Ensure that residents have a range of choices for accessible, affordable, and nutritious foods (Murrieta)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Encourage equitable distribution of healthy food retail and dining options in all commercial and employment areas of the City. (Murrieta)
- Research and consider land use regulations to limit fast food outlet density. (Murrieta)
- Identify and utilize available incentives, grants, and/or programs to encourage small grocery or convenience stores to sell basic healthy fresh food items. Programs could include grants or loans to purchase updated equipment, publicity, directories of healthy food outlets, or connecting stores to wholesale sources of healthy food. (Murrieta)
- Encourage restaurants to voluntarily eliminate trans fats from their menus. (Murrieta)

- Identify and utilize available incentives, grants, and/or programs to encourage restaurants to create a healthier dining experience for customers by highlighting healthy dishes, offering smaller portion sizes, and disclosing nutrition facts. (Murrieta)
- Support community education programs on healthy eating habits and lifestyles, including topics such as nutrition, physical activity, and vegetable gardening. (Murrieta)
- Encourage larger food retailers to carry specialty ethnic food items and support the opening of smaller ethnic food stores. (Murrieta)

Social Equity

[Employment and Economic Health](#)

[Community Engagement](#)

[Housing](#)

[Access to Public Amenities](#)

Employment and Economic Health

Goal: The City shall encourage economic and racial integration, fair housing opportunity, and the elimination of discrimination. (City of Sacramento)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Provide widespread access to diverse employment and training opportunities and strive to increase job growth, particularly jobs that provide self-sufficient wages and health care benefits, to allow the community to broadly share in the region's prosperity. (San Jose)
- Attract and retain a diverse mix of businesses and industries that can provide jobs for residents of all skill and education levels to support a thriving community. (San Jose, Washington D.C.)

- Attract job opportunities accessible to all residents, particularly residents in low-income neighborhoods. (San Jose)
- Partner with educational, civic, labor, and business institutions to provide job training programs that enable the unemployed, under-employed, or economically or socially disadvantaged to enter or move up in the labor force. Support and enhance education, training and recruitment programs and services for local residents to increase job and employment opportunities and compete in the regional economy. Connect local businesses with such programs, organizations, or educational institutions. (Richmond and San Jose, modified)
- Encourage a network of active and effective community development corporations (CDCs) and similar neighborhood-based economic development groups. The District should assist CDCs and similar organizations in acquiring the necessary technical and financial skills to participate in neighborhood revitalization projects. It should integrate the work of such groups into the city's overall planning and economic development initiatives. (Washington D.C.)
- Focus workforce development efforts on economically disadvantaged communities, particularly those with many unemployed or marginally employed residents. Assistance should also be focused on groups most in need, including persons with limited work skills, single mothers, youth leaving foster care, ex-offenders, and persons with limited English proficiency. (Richmond and Washington D.C.)
- Encourage businesses and industries to hire locally and to demonstrate reasons for not hiring local employees. (Richmond)

Community Engagement

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Actively develop community awareness, understanding, and interest in land use issues and public policy issues, including land use, and empower the community to engage in the shaping of those policies. (San Jose)
- Strengthen ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity by supporting programs that celebrate cultural differences and similarities and promote tolerance. (Chico)
- Provide a transparent process for public engagement of diverse stakeholders. (San Jose)
- Provide support for increased community participation, particularly in areas, such as those with language barriers or a concentration of low income households that historically have had less familiarity or experience with participation in the development

and implementation of City policies and particularly those communities that historically have been impacted by power plants, trash transfer stations, and other municipal or industrial uses, in the planning and development processes. (San Jose, City of Sacramento, and Washington D.C., modified)

- Facilitate the involvement of community residents, businesses, and organizations in the development, adoption, and implementation of community health initiatives and consider their input throughout the decision-making process. (National City)

Housing

Goal: The City shall encourage a range of housing opportunities for all segments of the community. (City of Sacramento)

Objective: The City shall promote an equitable distribution of housing types for all income groups throughout the city and promote mixed income neighborhoods rather than creating concentrations of below-market-rate housing in certain areas. Encourage new projects to include a range of housing types including single-family residences, townhomes, condominiums and rental units. (City of Sacramento, Richmond and Washington D.C.)

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Facilitate the development of housing to meet the community's fair share of the County's and region's housing needs. (San Jose)
- Increase, preserve and improve the affordable housing stock. (San Jose)
- Update the City's dispersion policy: 1) to align the location of future affordable housing developments with planned future Growth Areas identified in the Envision General Plan; 2) to be consistent with the City's inclusionary housing ordinance; 3) to maximize the access of transit, retail, services, and amenities to affordable housing developments; and 4) to reemphasize the support for integration and complete communities. (San Jose)
- The City shall consider the economic integration of neighborhoods when financing new multifamily affordable housing projects. (City of Sacramento)
- The City shall revise its Mixed-Income Housing Ordinance to promote affordable housing citywide and to require developers to contribute towards production of housing affordable to lower- and moderate-income households. (City of Sacramento)

- Recognize the importance of preserving rental housing affordability to the well-being of the community and the diversity of its neighborhoods. Undertake programs to protect the supply of subsidized rental units and low-cost market rate units. (Washington D.C.)
- Maintain programs to minimize displacement resulting from the conversion or renovation of affordable rental housing to more costly forms of housing. (Washington D.C.)
- The City shall promote the siting, production, rehabilitation, and preservation of housing for ELI (Extremely Low-Income) households, including nontraditional housing types. (City of Sacramento)
- Remove regulatory constraints to equal housing opportunity. (Chico)
- Strongly enforce fair housing laws to protect residents from housing discrimination. Provide education, outreach, and referral services for residents regarding their rights as tenants and buyers. Provide education and outreach to landlords, property managers, real estate agents, and others on their obligations when housing is made available. The City shall support fair housing education programs offered by local organizations such as the Apartment Owner's Association and the Board of Realtors.. (Washington D.C. , Chico, and City of Sacramento)
- The City shall pursue and maximize the use of all appropriate state, federal, local and private funding for the development, preservation, and rehabilitation of housing affordable for extremely low-, very low-, low-, and moderate income households, while maintaining economic competitiveness in the region. (City of Sacramento)
- The City shall continue to administer its Preservation Ordinance to ensure no loss of regulated multifamily rental units. (City of Sacramento)
- The City shall support homeownership among low- and moderate-income households through a variety of homebuyer assistance programs. (City of Sacramento)
- Work with social service agencies and all federal, state, and local jurisdictions to provide an integrated system of care for people experiencing homelessness. (Richmond)
- Address the over-concentration of industrial uses in lower income communities. Develop solutions to reduce the adverse effects of these uses, such as enhanced buffering, sound walls, operational improvements, truck routing, increased monitoring of impacts, and zoning changes to reduce land use conflicts. (Washington D.C.)

Access to Public Amenities

Recommended Policies & Programs

- Maintain and improve access to transit stops and stations for mobility-challenged population groups such as youth, the disabled, and seniors. (San Jose)
- Create a balanced park system that provides all residents access to parks, trails, open space, community centers, dog parks, skate parks, aquatics facilities, sports fields, community gardens, and other amenities. (San Jose)
- Apply resources to meet parks, recreation, and open space needs in underserved areas of the city, prioritizing lower income and higher density areas, which may have a demonstrably greater need for these amenities. (San Jose)
- Provide diverse recreational activities for persons of all ages and cultural backgrounds, distributed equitably in all parts of the city. Coordinate with other service providers, including public schools, to maximize the effectiveness of service delivery and minimize redundancy. (Washington D.C.)
- The City shall continue to provide assistance to emergency shelter facilities for the homeless population, including alcohol and drug recovery programs. (City of Sacramento)
- Encourage the location of health care facilities and hospitals in areas that are underserved and lack adequate health care facilities. (San Jose)
- Encourage convenience stores, supermarkets, liquor stores and neighborhood and ethnic markets to carry fresh produce, meats and dairy, 100% juices and whole-grain products especially in low-income and underserved neighborhoods. (Richmond)
- Support and encourage the expansion of paratransit and public transit service to neighborhood and regional medical facilities. Collaborate with transit service providers to adequately serve people who are transit-dependent by improving connections to regional medical facilities that serve Richmond residents and businesses. (Richmond)

Appendix B: Court and Attorney General Opinions

Appendix C: New state legislation related to General Plans

[AB 52 \(Gatto, 2014\)](#)

Specifies that a project with an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, as defined, is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment. Requires a lead agency to begin consultation with a California Native American tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed project, if the tribe requested consultation to the lead agency in writing

[AB 1505 \(Ducheny, 1999\)](#)

Farmworker housing

Requires the housing element to identify adequate sites for farmworker housing.

Amends Sections 51238, 51238.5, 65580, 65583, and 65950 of, and adds Section 51230.2 to, the Government Code.

[AB 2838 \(Hertzberg, 2000\)](#)

Local agency formation commissions

Provides that a LAFCO require as a condition to annexation that a city prezone the territory to be annexed, and requires that approval of the annexation be consistent with planned and probable use based upon review of the general plan and prezoning designations. Also authorizes the LAFCO to review the consistency of a proposal within a city's general plan when a proposed action would require the extension of critical services.

Amends and adds several sections of multiple state codes.

[AB 2292 \(Dutra, 2002\)](#)

General plans: residential density

Prohibits a city or county from reducing the residential density for any parcel to a density that is below the density that was utilized by the Department of Housing and Community Development in determining compliance with housing element law.

Adds Section 65863 to the Government Code.

[SB 1468 \(Knight, 2002\)](#)

General plans: military facilities

Requires specified elements (land use, open space, and circulation) to incorporate consideration of military facilities and readiness activities. Also requires that, in counties with

a military airport, the county's general plan and any applicable specific plans be consistent with safety and noise standards in the Air Installation Compatible Use Zone prepared for that military airport.

Amends Sections 65040.2, 65302, 65302.3, 65560, and 65583 of, and adds Section 65040.9 to, the Government Code, amends Section 21675 of the Public Utilities Code.

AB 1108 (Pavley, 2002)

Environmental quality: scoping meetings: military areas.

Requires a CEQA lead agency to submit notices to the military service if a project includes a general plan amendment and is within specific boundaries of a low-level flight path, military impact zone, or special use airport.

Amends Section 21083.9 of, and adds Sections 21098 and 21098.1 to, the Public Resources Code.

SB 18 (Burton, 2004)

Traditional tribal cultural places

Requires agencies to consult with California Native American tribes, and provide opportunities for involvement to tribes, during the preparation or amendment of the general plan.

Amends Section 815.3 of the Civil Code, amends Sections 65040.2, 65092, 65351, 65352, and 65560 of, adds Sections 65352.3, 65352.4, and 65562.5 to the Government Code.

AB 3065 (Kehoe, 2004)

General plan: safety element

See also SB 1241 (Kehoe, 2012)

Revises safety element requirements for state responsibility areas and very high fire hazard severity zones. Also requires that the safety element be submitted to the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection and to local agencies that provide fire protection to territory in the city or county.

Amends Section 65302 of, and repeals and adds Section 65302.5 of, the Government Code, and repeals Section 4128.5 of the Public Resources Code.

SB 926 (Knight, 2004)

Economic development

Makes several changes to planning and general plan law, including changes to procedure for military consultation, and requires consultation with DOC and OES prior to preparation of safety element.

Amends and adds several sections of multiple state codes.

SB 1462 (Kuehl, 2004)

Military readiness activities: special use airspace

Requires the planning agency, during preparations to adopt or substantially amend a general plan, to refer the proposed action to branches of the US Armed Forces when the proposed action lies within 1,000 feet of a military installation, within special use airspace, or beneath a low-level flight path.

Amends Sections 65352, 65404, 65940, and 65944 of the Government Code.

AB 1268 (Wiggins, 2004)

Land use

Authorizes the text and diagrams in the land use element that address the location and extent of land uses and the zoning ordinances that implement these provisions to express community intentions regarding urban form and design.

Adds Section 65302.4 to the Government Code.

AB 2140 (Hancock, 2006)

General plans: safety element

Authorizes a city or county to adopt with its safety element a federally specified local hazard mitigation plan, and limits the state share for projects eligible under the CA Disaster Assistance Act unless a local jurisdiction has adopted a local hazard mitigation plan in accordance with the federal Disaster Mitigation Act as part of its safety element.

Adds Sections 8685.9 and 65302.6 to the Government Code.

AB 1019 (Blakeslee, 2007)

Land use: annexation: housing

Authorizes an agreement on a revised determination of regional housing needs if an annexation of unincorporated land to a city occurs after the council of governments, or the department for areas with no council of governments, has made its final allocation.

Amends Section 65584.07 of the Government Code.

AB 162 (Wolk, 2007)

Land use: water supply

Requires specified elements to address flood hazards and identify areas that may accommodate floodwater for purposes of groundwater recharge and stormwater management. Requires safety element to address flood hazards as specified.

Amends Sections 65302, 65303.4, 65352, 65584.04, and 65584.06 of, and adds Sections 65300.2 and 65302.7 to, the Government Code.

AB 1358 (Leno, 2008)

Planning: circulation element: transportation

Requires a city or county, upon any substantive revision of the circulation element, to modify the circulation element to plan for a balanced, multimodal transportation network that meets the needs of all users of streets, roads, and highways, in a manner that is suitable to the rural, suburban, or urban context of the general plan.

Amends Sections 65040.2 and 65302 of the Government Code.

SB 375 (Steinberg, 2008)

**Transportation planning: travel demand models:
sustainable communities strategy: environmental review**

Requires regional transportation plans to include a sustainable communities strategy. Also makes various changes to timing for review and revision of housing elements.

Amends and adds several sections of multiple state codes.

AB 45 (Blakeslee, 2009)

Distributed generation: small wind energy systems

Authorizes a county to adopt an ordinance that provides for the installation of small wind energy systems outside an urbanized area, and to establish a process for the issuance of conditional use permits for these systems.

Adds and repeals Article 2.11 (commencing with Section 65893) of, and repeals the heading of Article 2.11 (commencing with Section 65892.13) of, Chapter 4 of Division 1 of Title 7 of the Government Code.

SB 575 (Steinberg, 2009)

Local planning: housing element

Requires a local government to review its housing element as frequently as appropriate, but no less often than required by a specified schedule.

Amends Sections 65080, 65583, and 65588 of the Government Code, and amends Section 75123 of the Public Resources Code.

SB 812 (Ashburn, 2010)

Developmental services: housing

Requires a local government to include needs of individuals with a developmental disability in the housing element's analysis of special housing needs.

Amends Section 65583 of the Government Code.

SB 226 (Simitian, 2011)

Environmental quality

Limits the application of CEQA in the case of the approval of an infill project that satisfies specified standards if an EIR was certified for a planning level decision, including the enactment or amendment of a general plan, community plan, specific plan, or zoning code. Also authorizes the referral of a proposed action to adopt or substantially amend a general plan to a city or county bordering the city or county within which the project is located to be conducted concurrently with the CEQA scoping meeting.

Amends Section 65919.10 of the Government Code, and amends Sections 21083.9 and 21084 of, and adds Sections 21080.35, 21094.5, 21094.5.5, and 25500.1 to, the Public Resources Code.

SB 244 (Wolk, 2011)

**Local government: land use: general plan:
disadvantaged unincorporated communities.**

Requires the land use element to include analysis of the presence of island, fringe, or legacy unincorporated communities. Subsequently amended by SB 1090 (2012).

Amends Sections 56375, 56425, and 56430 of, and adds Sections 53082.5, 56033.5, and 65302.10 to, the Government Code, and adds Section 13481.7 to the Water Code.

SB 1090 (Comm. On Governance and Finance, 2012)

Local government: omnibus bill

Amends statutory language added by SB 244 (2011). Requires the update of the land use element to be based on specified available data and to include identification of each island or fringe community that is a disadvantaged unincorporated community.

Amends and adds several sections of multiple state codes.

SB 1241 (Kehoe, 2012)

Land use: general plan: safety element: fire hazard impacts

See also AB 3065 (Kehoe, 2004)

Revises safety element requirements for state responsibility areas and very high fire hazard severity zones and requires the safety element to take into account specified considerations, including the most recent version of the Office of Planning and Research's "Fire Hazard Planning" document.

Amends Sections 65302 and 65302.5 of, and adds Sections 65040.20 and 66474.02 to, the Government Code, and adds Section 21083.01 to the Public Resources Code.

[SB 743 \(Steinberg, 2013\)](#)

Environmental Quality

[SB 1462 \(Comm. On Governance and Finance, 2014\)](#)

Local government: omnibus bill

Eliminates the requirement that the noise element recognize the guidelines established by the Office of Noise Control.

Amends and adds several sections of multiple state codes.

[AB 1739 \(Dickinson, 2014\)](#)

Groundwater management

Requires, prior to the adoption or any substantial amendment of a general plan, the planning agency to review and consider certain specified groundwater plans and refer a proposed action to certain specified groundwater management agencies.

Amends and adds several sections of multiple state codes.

[AB 52 \(Gatto, 2014\)](#)

Native Americans: California Environmental Quality Act

Specifies that a project with an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, as defined, is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment. Requires a lead agency to begin consultation with a California Native American tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed project, if the tribe requested consultation to the lead agency in writing

Together, the following bills make several changes to housing element law:

[SB 575 \(Torlakson, 2005\)](#)

[AB 1390 \(Jones, 2005\)](#)

[SB 1087 \(Florez, 2005\)](#)

[AB 1233 \(Jones, 2005\)](#)

[AB 2634 \(Lieber, 2006\)](#)

[SB 253 \(Torlakson, 2005\)](#)

[AB 2572 \(Emmerson, 2006\)](#)

[AB 382 \(Committee on Housing and Community Development, 2007\)](#)

[AB 2135](#) (Ting, 2014)**Appendix D: Noise Element Guidelines**

Guidelines for the Preparation and Content of the Noise Element of the General Plan

The noise element of the general plan provides a basis for comprehensive local programs to control and abate environmental noise and to protect citizens from excessive exposure. The fundamental goals of the noise element are:

- “ To provide sufficient information concerning the community noise environment so that noise may be effectively considered in the land use planning process. In so doing, the necessary groundwork will have been developed so that a community noise ordinance may be utilized to resolve noise complaints.
- “ To develop strategies for abating excessive noise exposure through cost-effective mitigating measures in combination with zoning, as appropriate, to avoid incompatible land uses.
- “ To protect those existing regions of the planning area whose noise environments are deemed acceptable and also those locations throughout the community deemed “noise sensitive.”
- “ To utilize the definition of the community noise environment in the form of CNEL or Ldn noise contours as provided in the noise element for local compliance with the State Noise Insulation Standards. These standards require specified levels of outdoor to indoor noise reduction for new multifamily residential constructions in areas where the outdoor noise exposure exceeds CNEL (or Ldn) 60 dB.

The 1976 edition of the *Noise Element Guidelines*, prepared by the California Department of Health Services (DHS), was a result of SB 860 (Beilenson, 1975), which became effective January 1, 1976. SB 860, among other things, revised and clarified the requirements for the noise element of each city and county general plan and gave DHS the authority to issue guidelines for compliance thereto. Compliance with the 1976 version of these guidelines was mandated only

for those noise elements that were not submitted to the Office of Planning and Research by the effective date of SB 860 and to subsequent revisions of previously submitted noise elements.

A comparison between the 1976 *Noise Element Guidelines* and this revised edition will not reveal substantial changes. The basic methodology advanced by that previous edition remains topical. Where necessary, code references have been updated and the text revised to reflect statutory changes.

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

DEFINITIONS

Decibel, dB: A unit of measurement describing the amplitude of sound, equal to 20 times the logarithm to the base 10 of the ratio of the pressure of the sound measured to the reference pressure, which is 20 micropascals (20 micronewtons per square meter).

A-Weighted Level: The sound level in decibels as measured on a sound level meter using the A-weighting filter network. The A-weighting filter de-emphasizes the very low and very high frequency components of the sound in a manner similar to the response of the human ear and gives good correlation with subjective reactions to noise.

L10: The A-weighted sound level that is exceeded ten percent of the sample time. Similarly, L50, L90, etc.

Leq: Equivalent energy level. The sound level corresponding to a steady-state sound level containing the same total energy as a time-varying signal over a given sample period. Leq is typically computed over 1-, 8-, and 24-hour sample periods.

CNEL: Community Noise Equivalent Level. The average equivalent A-weighted sound level during a 24-hour day, obtained after addition of five decibels to sound levels in the evening from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. and after addition of 10 decibels to sound levels in the night from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m.

Ldn: Day-Night Average Level. The average equivalent A-weighted sound level during a 24-hour day, obtained after the addition of 10 decibels to sound levels in the night after 10 p.m. and before 7 a.m. (Note: CNEL and Ldn represent daily levels of noise exposure averaged on an annual or daily basis, while Leq represents the equivalent energy noise exposure for a shorter time period, typically one hour.)

Noise Contours: Lines drawn about a noise source indicating equal levels of noise

NOISE ELEMENT REQUIREMENTS

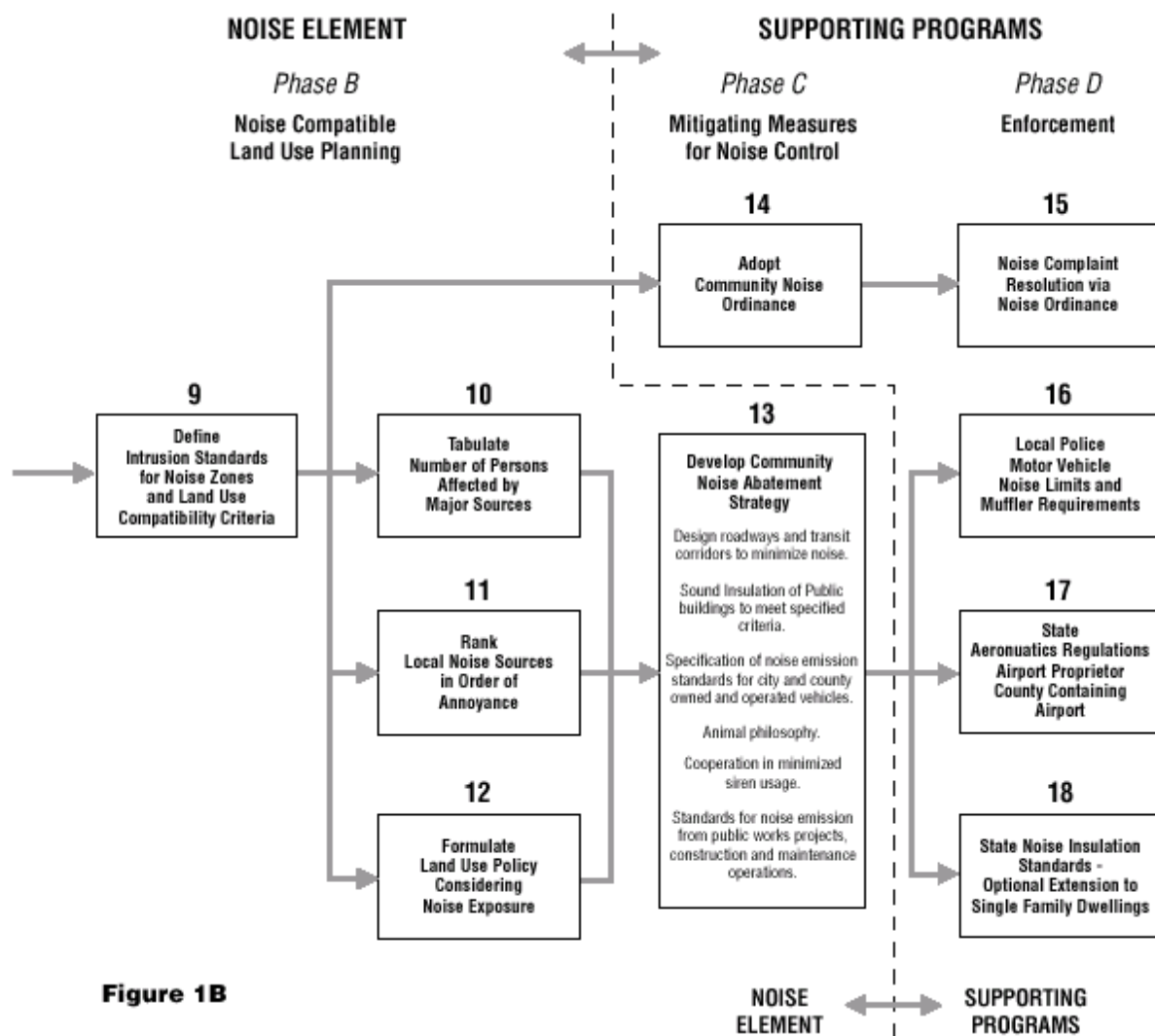
Government Code Section 65302(f): A noise element shall identify and appraise noise problems in the community. The noise element shall recognize the guidelines established by the Office of Noise Control in the State Department of Health Services and shall analyze and quantify, to the extent practicable, as determined by the legislative body, current and projected noise levels for all of the following sources:

1. Highways and freeways.
2. Primary arterials and major local streets.
3. Passenger and freight online railroad operations and ground rapid transit systems.
4. Commercial, general aviation, heliport, helistop, and military airport operations, aircraft overflights, jet engine test stands, and all other ground facilities and maintenance functions related to airport operation.
5. Local industrial plants, including, but not limited to, railroad classification yards.
6. Other ground stationary sources identified by local agencies as contributing to the community noise environment.

Noise contours shall be shown for all of these sources and stated in terms of community noise equivalent level (CNEL) or day-night average level (Ldn). The noise contours shall be prepared on the basis of noise monitoring or following generally accepted noise modeling techniques for the various sources identified in paragraphs (1) to (6), inclusive.

The noise contours shall be used as a guide for establishing a pattern of land uses in the land use element that minimizes the exposure of community residents to excessive noise.

The noise element shall include implementation measures and possible solutions that address existing and foreseeable noise problems, if any. The adopted noise element shall serve as a guideline for compliance with the state's noise insulation standards.

**Figure 1B**

NOISE ELEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The sequential steps for development of a noise element as an integral part of a community's total noise control program are illustrated in the flow diagrams of figures 1A and 1B. The concept presented herein utilizes the noise element as the central focus of the community's program and provides the groundwork for all subsequent enforcement efforts. The process may be described in terms of four phases:

Phase A: Noise Environment Definition

Phase B: Noise-Compatible Land Use Planning

Phase C: Noise Mitigation Measures

Phase D: Enforcement

These phases encompass a total of eighteen defined tasks, the first thirteen of which relate directly to the statutory requirements contained in Government Code §65302(f). The remainder relate to critical supportive programs (noise ordinances, etc.). Citations from §65302(f) are contained within quotation marks.

Phase A: Noise Environment Definition

The purpose of this phase is to adequately identify and appraise the existing and future noise environment of the community in terms of Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL) or Day-Night Average Level (Ldn) noise contours for each major noise source and to divide the city or county into noise zones for subsequent noise ordinance application.

Step 1:

Identify a specific individual or lead agency within the local government to be responsible for coordination of local noise control activities. This individual or agency should be responsible for coordinating all intergovernmental activities and subsequent enforcement efforts.

Step 2:

Review noise complaint files as compiled by all local agencies (police, animal control, health, airport, traffic department, etc.) in order to assess the following:

1. Location and types of major offending noise sources.
2. Noise-sensitive areas and land uses.
3. Community attitudes towards specific sources of noise pollution.
4. Degree of severity of noise problems in the community.
5. Relative significance of noise as a pollutant.

Step 3:

Specifically identify major sources of community noise based upon the review of complaint files and interagency discussion and the following statutory subjects:

1. Highways and freeways.
2. Primary arterials and major local streets.
3. Passenger and freight online railroad operations and ground rapid transit systems.
4. Commercial, general aviation, heliport, helistop, and military airport operations, aircraft overflights, jet engine test stands, and all other ground facilities and maintenance functions related to airport operation.
5. Local industrial plants, including, but not limited to, railroad classification yards.
6. Other ground stationary noise sources identified by local agencies as contributing to the community noise environment. (§65302(f))

In addition, the land uses and areas within the community that are noise sensitive should be identified at the same time.

Step 4:

Given the identification of major noise sources and an indication of the community's attitude toward noise pollution (when available), it is advisable to conduct a community noise survey. The purposes of the survey are threefold:

First and foremost, to define by measurement the current noise levels at those sites deemed noise sources and to establish noise level contours around them. The noise contours must be expressed in terms of CNEL or Ldn.

Second, the collected data will form the basis for an analysis of noise exposure from major sources.

Finally, the survey should define the existing ambient noise level throughout the community. Intrusive noises over and above this general predetermined ambient level may then be controlled through implementation of a noise ordinance.

Step 5:

Given the definition of existing ambient noise levels throughout the community, one may proceed with a classification of the community into broad regions of generally consistent land uses and similar noise environments. Because these regions will be varying distances from identified major noise sources, the relative levels of environmental noise will be different from one another. Therefore, subsequent enforcement efforts and mitigating measures may be oriented towards maintaining quiet areas and improving noisy ones.

Step 6:

Directing attention once again to the major noise sources previously identified, it is essential to gather operations and activity data in order to proceed with the analytical noise exposure prediction. This data is somewhat source-specific but generally should consist of the following information and be supplied by the owner/operator of the source:

1. Average daily level of activity (traffic volume, flights per day, hours of operation, etc.).
2. Distribution of activity over day and night time periods, days of the week, and seasonal variations.
3. Average noise level emitted by the source at various levels of activity.
4. Precise source location and proximity to noise-impacted land uses.
5. Composition of noise sources (percentage of trucks on highway, aircraft fleet mix, industrial machinery type, etc.).

Step 7:

In addition to collecting data on the variables affecting noise-source emission for the existing case, future values for these parameters need to be assessed. This is best accomplished by correlating the noise element with other general plan elements (i.e. land use, circulation, housing, etc.) and regional transportation plans and by coordination with other responsible agencies (Airport Land Use Commission, Caltrans, etc.).

Step 8:

Analytical noise exposure modeling techniques may be utilized to develop source-specific noise contours around major noise sources in the community.

"The noise contours shall be prepared on the basis of noise monitoring or following generally accepted noise modeling techniques..." (§65302(f))

Simplified noise prediction methodologies are available through the Department of Health Services for highway and freeway noise, railroad noise, simple fixed stationary and industrial sites, and general aviation aircraft (with less than twenty percent commercial jet aircraft activity—two engine jet only). Noise contours for larger airport facilities and major industrial sites are sufficiently complex that they must be developed via sophisticated computer techniques available through recognized acoustical consulting firms. (Airport contours generally have already been developed in accordance with requirements promulgated by Caltrans' Division of Aeronautics: Noise Standards, Title 21, Section 5000, et seq., California Code of Regulations.)

Although considerable effort may go into developing noise contours that, in some instances, utilize rather sophisticated digital programming techniques, the present state of the art is such that their accuracy is usually no better than ± 3 dB. In fact, the accuracy of the noise exposure prediction decreases with increasing distance from the noise source. In the near vicinity of the source, prediction accuracy may be within the range of ± 1 dB, while at greater distances this may deteriorate to ± 5 dB or more. At greater distances, meteorological and topographic effects, typically not totally accounted for in most models, may have significant influence. Thus, while dealing with the concept of noise contours, it is best not to think of them as absolute lines of demarcation on a map (such as topographical contours), but rather as bands of similar noise exposure.

In addition to assessment of the present-day noise environment, it is recommended that the noise exposure data be projected through the time horizon of the general plan. The noise element should be updated and corrected every five years, or sooner as is necessary, and, at that time, the forecasted noise exposure should be projected an additional five years.

Phase B: Noise-Compatible Land Use Planning

A noise planning policy needs to be rather flexible and dynamic to reflect not only technological advances in noise control, but also economic constraints governing application of noise-control technology and anticipated regional growth and demands of the community. In the final analysis, each community must decide the level of noise exposure its residents are willing to tolerate within a limited range of values below the known levels of health impairment.

Step 9:

Given the definition of the existing and forecasted noise environment provided by the Phase A efforts, the locality preparing the noise element must now approach the problem of defining how much noise is too much. Guidelines for noise-compatible land use are presented in Figure 2. The adjustment factors given in Table 1 may be used in order to arrive at noise-acceptability standards that reflect the noise-control goals of the community, the particular community's sensitivity to noise (as determined in Step 2), and the community's assessment of the relative importance of noise pollution.

Step 10:

As a prerequisite to establishing an effective noise-control program, it is essential to know, in quantitative terms, the extent of noise problems in the community. This is best accomplished by determining, for each major noise source around which noise contours have been developed, the number of community residents exposed and to what extent. It is also useful to identify those noise-sensitive land uses whose noise exposure exceeds the recommended standards given in Figure 2. The exposure inventory can be accomplished by using recent census data, adjusted for regional growth, and tabulating the population census blocks within given noise contours.

Step 11:

Once the noise exposure inventory is completed, the relative significance of specific noise sources in the community (in terms of population affected) will become apparent. The local agencies involved may wish to use this information to orient their noise-control and abatement efforts to achieve the most good. Clearly, control of certain major offending sources will be beyond the jurisdiction of local agencies; however, recognition of these limitations should prompt more effective land use planning strategies.

Step 12:

A major objective of the noise element is to utilize this information to ensure noise-compatible land use planning:

"The noise contours shall be used as a guide for establishing a pattern of land uses in the land use element that minimizes the exposure of community residents to excessive noise." (§65302(f))

The intent of such planning is to:

- (1) Maintain those areas deemed acceptable in terms of noise exposure.
- (2) Use zoning or other land use controls in areas with excessive noise exposure to limit uses to those which are noise compatible and to restrict other, less compatible uses.

Phase C: Noise Mitigation Measures

Step 13:

Based upon the relative importance of noise sources in order of community impact and local attitudes towards these sources, "[t]he noise element shall include implementation measures and possible solutions that address existing and foreseeable noise problems, if any" (§65302(f)).

Selection of these noise-mitigating measures should be coordinated through all local agencies in order to be most effective. Minimization of noise emissions from all local government-controlled or sanctioned activities should be a priority item. This includes low noise specifications for new city or county owned and operated vehicles (and noise reduction retrofitting where economically possible) and noise emission limits on public works projects. Local governments should insure that public buildings (especially schools) are sufficiently insulated to allow their intended function to be uninterrupted by exterior noise. Local agencies can work with state and federal bodies to minimize transportation noise, primarily through transitway design, location, or configuration modifications.

Additional measures might include such policies as limitation of siren usage by police, fire, and ambulance units within populated areas. Animal control units may be encouraged to minimize barking dog complaints through use of an improved public relations campaign termed "Animal Philosophy." This involves working with pet owners to determine why the dog barks and attempting solutions rather than just issuing citations. Local zoning and subdivision ordinances may require the use of noise-reducing building materials or the installation of sound-insulating walls along major roads in new construction and subdivisions.

In general, local noise reduction programs need to address the problems specific to each community, with the ultimate goals being the reduction of complaint frequency and the provision of a healthful noise environment for all residents of the community.

The remaining steps are beyond the scope of the noise element requirements, but pertain to coordination with other state noise-control programs and achievement of the goals set forth in the noise element through development of an active local noise-control effort.

Step 14:

While the noise element identifies problem areas and seeks to develop medium- and long-range solutions to them, a community noise ordinance is the only viable instrument for short-term or immediate solutions to intrusive noise. A model noise ordinance that can be tailored to the specific needs of a given community by simply incorporating those sections deemed most applicable has been developed by the Department of Health Services. The model ordinance also suggests a cure for non-stationary or transient types of noise events, for which noise contours are generally meaningless.

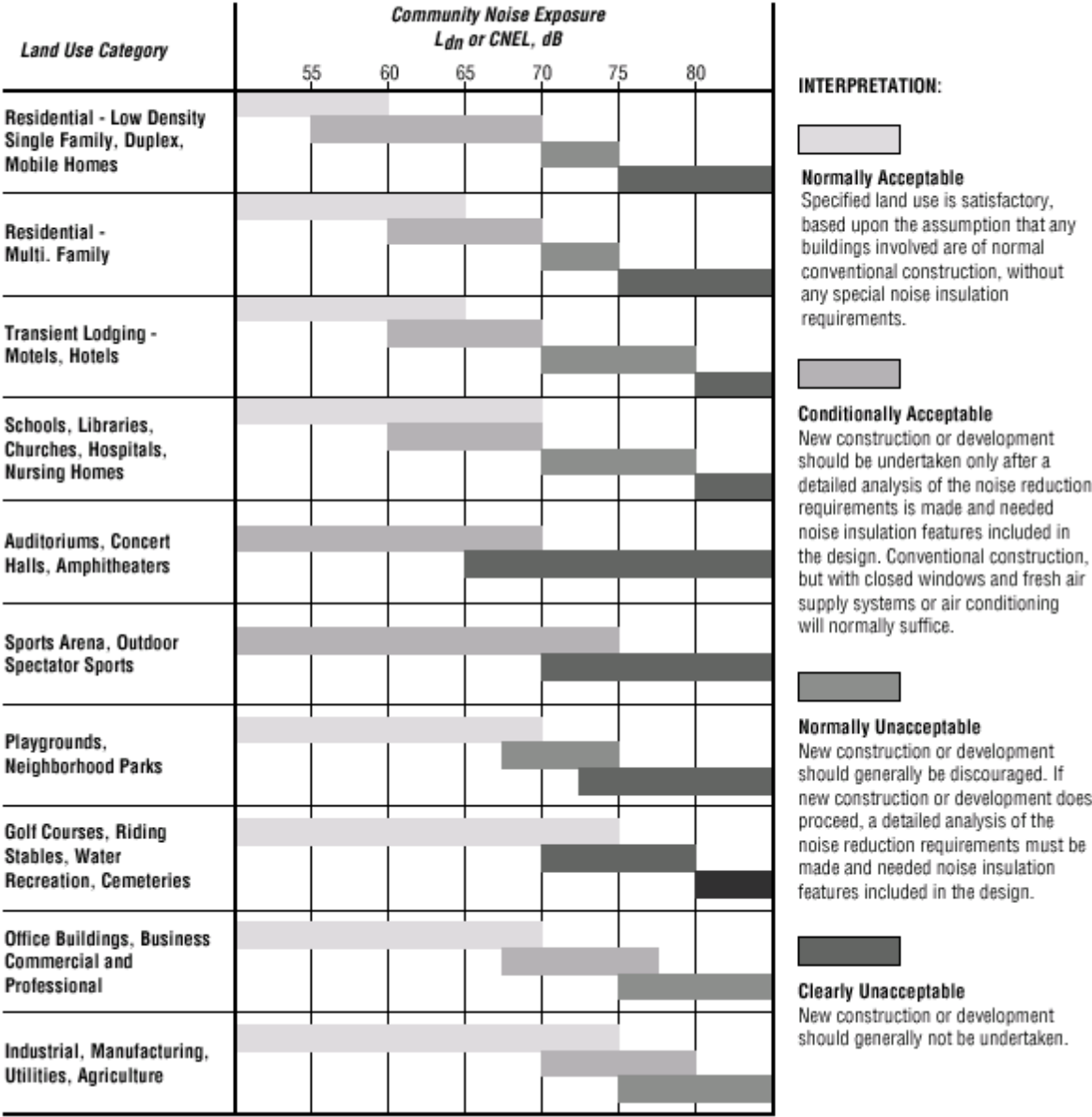
Phase D: Enforcement

To adequately carry out the programs identified in the noise element and to comply with state requirements for certain other noise-control programs, specific enforcement programs are recommended at the local level.

Step 15:

Adopt and apply a community noise ordinance for resolution of noise complaints.

FIGURE 2



<i>Type of Correction</i>	Table 1 <i>Description</i>	<i>Amount of Correction to be Added to Measured CNEL in dB</i>
Seasonal Correction	Summer (or year-round operation)	0
	Winter only (or windows always closed)	- 5
Correction for Outdoor Residual Noise Level	Quiet suburban or rural community (remote from large cities and from industrial activity and trucking).	+ 10
	Quiet suburban or rural community (not located near industrial activity).	+ 5
	Urban residential community (not immediately adjacent to heavily traveled roads and industrial areas).	0
	Noisy urban residential community (near relatively busy roads or industrial areas).	- 5
	Very noisy urban residential community.	- 10
Correction for Previous Exposure and Community Attitudes	No prior experience with the intruding noise.	+ 5
	Community has had some previous exposure to intruding but little effort is being made to control the noise. This correction may also be applied in a situation where the community has not been exposed to the noise previously, but the people are aware that bona fide efforts are being made to control the noise.	0
	Community has had considerable previous exposure to the intruding noise and the noise maker's relations with the community are good.	- 5
	Community aware that operation causing noise is very necessary and it will not continue indefinitely. This correction can be applied for an operation of limited duration and under emergency circumstances.	- 10
Pure Tone or Impulse	No pure tone or impulsive character.	0
	Pure Tone or impulsive character present.	+ 5

Step 16:

Recent studies have shown that the most objectionable feature of traffic noise is the sound produced by vehicles equipped with illegal or faulty exhaust systems. In addition, such hot rod vehicles are often operated in a manner that causes tire squeal and excessively loud exhaust noise. There are a number of statewide vehicle noise regulations that can be enforced by local authorities as well as the California Highway Patrol. Specifically, Sections 23130, 23130.5, 27150,

27151, and 38275 of the California Vehicle Code, as well as excessive speed laws, may be applied to curtail this problem. Both the Highway Patrol and the Department of Health Services (through local health departments) are available to aid local authorities in code enforcement and training pursuant to proper vehicle sound-level measurements.

Step 17:

Commercial and public airports operating under a permit from Caltrans' Aeronautics Program are required to comply with both state aeronautics standards governing aircraft noise and all applicable legislation governing the formation and activities of a local Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC). The function of the ALUC is, among other things, to develop a plan for noise-compatible land use in the immediate proximity of the airport. The local general plan must be reviewed for compatibility with this Airport Land Use Plan and amended if necessary (Public Utilities Code §21676). Therefore, the developers of the noise element will need to coordinate their activities with the local ALUC to ensure that compatible standards are utilized throughout the community and that the noise element develops as part of a coherent master plan, of which the ALUP forms an integral component.

Step 18:

"The adopted noise element shall serve as a guideline for compliance with the State's noise insulation standards." (§65302(f))

Recognizing the need to provide acceptable habitation environments, state law requires noise insulation of new multifamily dwellings constructed within the 60 dB (CNEL or Ldn) noise exposure contours. It is a function of the noise element to provide noise contour information around all major sources in support of the sound transmission control standards (Appendix, Chapter 2-35, Part 2, Title 24, California Code of Regulations).

RELATIONSHIP OF THE NOISE ELEMENT TO OTHER GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS

The noise element is related to the land use, housing, circulation, and open-space elements. Recognition of the interrelationship of noise and these four other mandated elements is

necessary in order to prepare an integrated general plan. The relationship between noise and these four elements is briefly discussed below.

“ Land Use—A key objective of the noise element is to provide noise exposure information for use in the land use element. When integrated with the noise element, the land use element will show acceptable land uses in relation to existing and projected noise contours. Section 65302(f) states that: “The noise contours shall be used as a guide for establishing a pattern of land uses in the land use element that minimizes the exposure of community residents to excessive noise.”

“ Housing—The housing element considers the provision of adequate sites for new housing and standards for housing stock. Since residential land use is among the most noise sensitive, the noise exposure information provided in the noise element must be considered when planning the location of new housing. Also, state law requires special noise insulation of new multifamily dwellings constructed within the 60 dB (CNEL or Ldn) noise exposure contour. This requirement may influence the location and cost of this housing type. In some cases, the noise environment may be a constraint on housing opportunities.

“ Circulation—The circulation system must be correlated with the land use element and is one of the major sources of noise. Noise exposure will thus be a decisive factor in the location and design of new transportation facilities and the possible mitigation of noise from existing facilities in relation to existing and planned land uses. The local planning agency may wish to review the circulation and land use elements simultaneously to assess their compatibility with the noise element.

“ Open Space—Excessive noise can adversely affect the enjoyment of recreational pursuits in designated open space. Thus, noise exposure levels should be considered when planning for this kind of open-space use. Conversely, open space can be used to buffer sensitive land uses from noise sources through the use of setbacks and landscaping. Open-space designation can also effectively exclude other land uses from excessively noisy areas.

SELECTION OF THE NOISE METRIC

The community noise metrics to be used in noise elements are either CNEL or Ldn (as specified in §65302(f)). A significant factor in the selection of these scales was compatibility with existing

quantifications of noise exposure currently in use in California. CNEL is the noise metric currently specified in the State Aeronautics Code for evaluation of noise impacts at specific airports that have been declared to have a noise problem. Local compliance with state airport noise standards necessitates that community noise be specified in CNEL. The Ldn represents a logical simplification of CNEL. It divides the day into two weighted time periods (Day—7 a.m. to 10 p.m. and Night—10 p.m. to 7 a.m.) rather than the three used in the CNEL measure (Day—7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Evening—7 p.m. to 10 p.m., and Night—10 p.m. to 7 a.m.) with no significant loss in accuracy.

CRITERIA FOR NOISE-COMPATIBLE LAND USE

Figure 2 summarizes the suggested use of the CNEL/Ldn metrics for evaluating land use noise compatibility. Such criteria require a rather broad interpretation, as illustrated by the ranges of acceptability for a given land use within a defined range of noise exposures.

Denotation of a land use as “normally acceptable” on Figure 2 implies that the highest noise level in that band is the maximum desirable for existing or conventional construction that does not incorporate any special acoustic treatment. In general, evaluation of land use that falls into the “normally acceptable” or “normally unacceptable” noise environments should include consideration of the type of noise source, the sensitivity of the noise receptor, the noise reduction likely to be provided by structures, and the degree to which the noise source may interfere with speech, sleep, or other activities characteristic of the land use.

Figure 2 also provides an interpretation as to the suitability of various types of construction with respect to the range of outdoor noise exposure.

The objective of the noise compatibility guidelines in Figure 2 is to provide the community with a means of judging the noise environment it deems to be generally acceptable. Many efforts have been made to account for the variability in perceptions of environmental noise that exist between communities and within a given community.

Beyond the basic CNEL or Ldn quantification of noise exposure, one can apply correction factors to the measured or calculated values of these metrics in order to account for some of the factors that may cause the noise to be more or less acceptable than the mean response. Significant among these factors are seasonal variations in noise source levels, existing outdoor ambient levels (i.e., relative intrusiveness of the source), general societal attitudes towards the

noise source, prior history of the source, and tonal characteristics of the source. When it is possible to evaluate some or all of these factors, the measured or computed noise exposure

values may be adjusted by means of the correction factors listed in Table 1 in order to more accurately assess local sentiments towards acceptable noise exposure.

In developing these acceptability recommendations, efforts were made to maintain consistency with the goals defined in the federal EPA's "Levels Document" and the State Sound Transmission Control Standards for multifamily housing. In both of these documents, an interior noise exposure of 45 dB CNEL (or Ldn) is recommended to permit normal residential activity. If one considers the typical range of noise reduction provided by residential dwellings (12 to 18 dB with windows partially open), the 60 dB outdoor value identified as "clearly acceptable" for residential land use would provide the recommended interior environment.

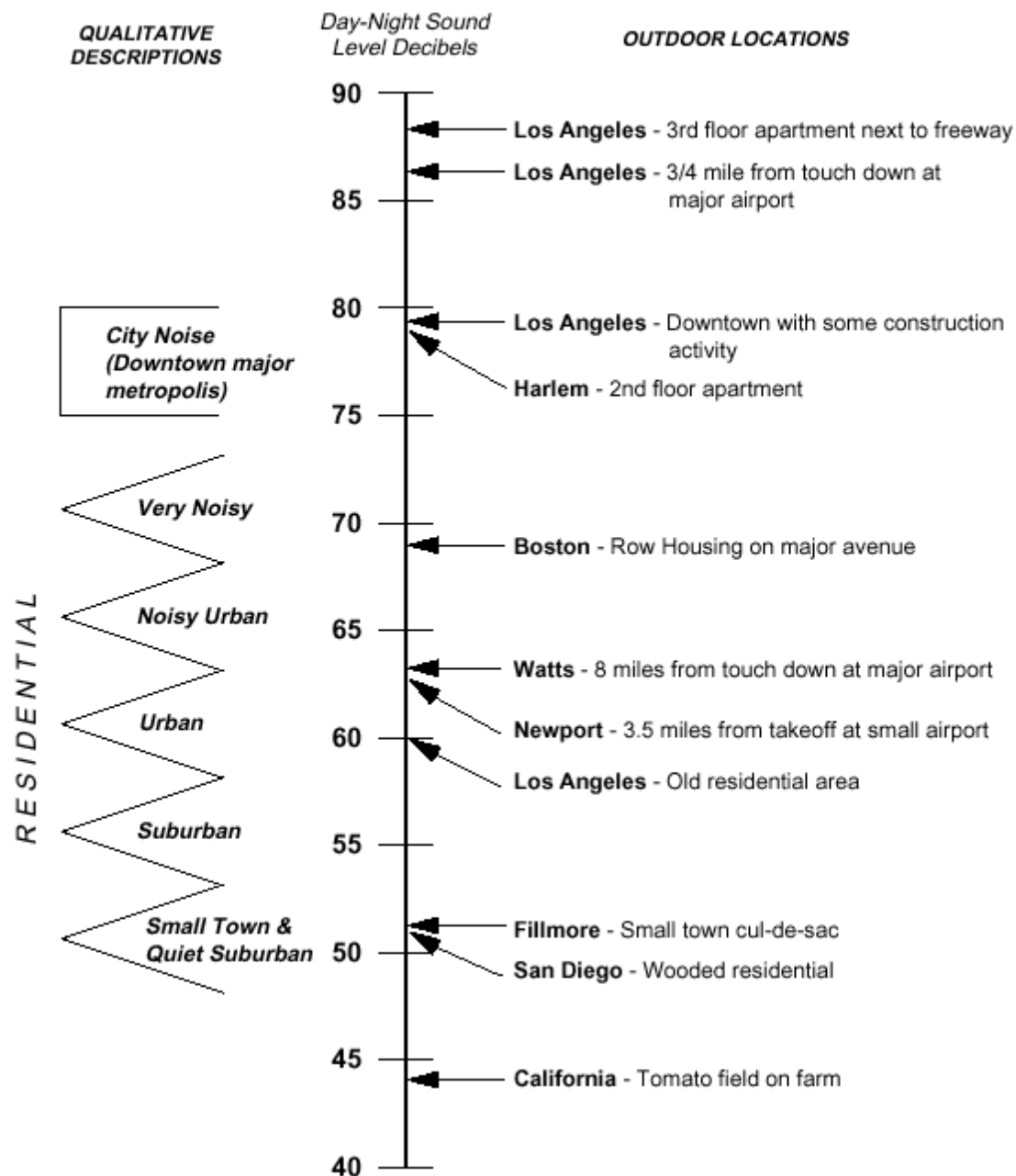
Figure 3

Figure 3 has been included in order to better explain the qualitative nature of community noise environments expressed in terms of Ldn. It is apparent that noise environments cover a broad range and that, in general, it may be observed that the quality of the environment improves as one moves further away from major transportation noise sources.

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Appendix E: Tools and Resources

Appendix F: Glossary: Defining the Parts of a General Plan

A general plan is made up of text describing goals and objectives, principles, standards, and plan proposals, as well as a set of maps and diagrams. Together, these constituent parts paint a picture of the community's future development. The following discussions help to clarify the meanings of these and other important terms.

Development Policy

A development policy is a general plan statement that guides action. In a broad sense, development policies include goals and objectives, principles, policies, standards, and plan proposals.

Diagram

A diagram is a graphic expression of a general plan's development policies, particularly its plan proposals. Many types of development policies lend themselves well to graphic treatment, such as the distribution of land uses, urban design, infrastructure, and geologic and other natural hazards.

A diagram must be consistent with the general plan text (§65300.5) and should have the same long-term planning perspective as the rest of the general plan. The Attorney General has observed that "...when the Legislature has used the term 'map,' it has required preciseness, exact location, and detailed boundaries...." as in the case of the Subdivision Map Act. No such precision is required of a general plan diagram (*67 Cal.Ops.Atty.Gen. 75,77*).

As a general rule, a diagram or diagrams, along with the general plan's text, should be detailed enough so that the users of the plan, whether staff, elected and appointed officials, or the public, can reach the same general conclusion on the appropriate use of any parcel of land at a particular phase of a city's or county's physical development. Decision-makers should also be able to use a general plan, including its diagram or diagrams, in coordinating day-to-day land use and infrastructure decisions with the city's or county's future physical development scheme.

At the same time, given the long-term nature of a general plan, its diagram or diagrams and text should be general enough to allow a degree of flexibility in decision-making as times change. For example, a general plan may recognize the need for and desirability of a community park in a proposed residential area, but the precise location of the park may not be known when the plan is adopted. The plan would not need to pinpoint the location, but it should have a generalized diagram along with policies saying that the park site will be selected and appropriate zoning applied at the time the area is subdivided. In this sense, while zoning must be consistent with the general plan, the plan's diagram or diagrams and the zoning map are not required to be identical.

Goal

A goal is a general direction-setter. It is an ideal future end related to the public health, safety, or general welfare. A goal is a general expression of community values and, therefore, may be abstract in nature. Consequently, a goal is generally not quantifiable or time-dependent.

Although goals are not mentioned in the description of general plan contents in §65302, they are included here for several reasons. First, defining goals is often the initial step of a comprehensive planning process, with more specific objectives defined later, as discussed in Chapter 3. Second, goals are specifically mentioned in the statutes governing housing element contents (§65583). Third, while the terms "goal" and "objective" are used interchangeably in some general plans, many plans differentiate between broad, unquantifiable goals and specific objectives. Either approach is allowable, as flexibility is a characteristic of the general plan.

Examples of goals:

- Quiet residential streets
- A diversified economic base for the city
- An aesthetically pleasing community
- A safe community

Goals should be expressed as ends, not actions. For instance, the first example above expresses an end, namely, "quiet residential streets." It does not say, "Establish quiet residential streets" or "To establish quiet residential streets."

Objective

An objective is a specified end, condition, or state that is an intermediate step toward attaining a goal. It should be achievable and, when possible, measurable and time-specific. An objective may pertain to one particular aspect of a goal or it may be one of several successive steps toward goal achievement. Consequently, there may be more than one objective for each goal.

Examples of objectives:

- The addition of 100 affordable housing units over the next five years.
- A 25 percent increase in downtown office space by 2030.
- A 50 percent reduction in the rate of farmland conversion over the next ten years.
- A reduction in stormwater runoff from streets and parking lots.

Principle

A principle is an assumption, fundamental rule, or doctrine guiding general plan policies, proposals, standards, and implementation measures. Principles are based on community values, generally accepted planning doctrine, current technology, and the general plan's objectives. In practice, principles underlie the process of developing the plan but seldom need to be explicitly stated in the plan itself.

Examples of principles:

- Mixed use encourages urban vitality.
- The residential neighborhoods within a city should be within a convenient and safe walking distance of an elementary school.
- Parks provide recreational and aesthetic benefits.

- Risks from natural hazards should be identified and avoided to the extent practicable.

Policy

A policy is a specific statement that guides decision-making. It indicates a commitment of the local legislative body to a particular course of action. A policy is based on and helps implement a general plan's objectives.

A policy is carried out by implementation measures. For a policy to be useful as a guide to action it must be clear and unambiguous. Adopting broadly drawn and vague policies is poor practice. Clear policies are particularly important when it comes to judging whether or not zoning decisions, subdivisions, public works projects, etc., are consistent with the general plan.

When writing policies, be aware of the difference between "shall" and "should." "Shall" indicates an unequivocal directive. "Should" signifies a less rigid directive, to be honored in the absence of compelling or contravening considerations. Use of the word "should" to give the impression of more commitment than actually intended is a common but unacceptable practice. It is better to adopt no policy than to adopt a policy with no backbone.

Solid policy is based on solid information. The analysis of data collected during the planning process provides local officials with the knowledge about trends, existing conditions, and projections that they need to formulate policy. If projected community conditions are not in line with a general plan's objectives, local legislative bodies may adopt policies that will help bring about a more desirable future.

Examples of policies:

- The city shall not approve a parking ordinance variance unless the variance pertains to the rebuilding of an unintentionally destroyed non-conforming use.
- The city shall not approve plans for the downtown shopping center until an independently conducted market study indicates that the center would be economically feasible.

- The city shall give favorable consideration to conditional use permit proposals involving adaptive reuse of buildings that are designated as “architecturally significant” by the cultural resources element.

Standards

A standard is a rule or measure establishing a level of quality or quantity that must be complied with or satisfied. Standards define the abstract terms of objectives and policies with concrete specifications.

The Government Code makes various references to general plan standards. For example, §65302(a) states in part that the land use element must “...include a statement of the standards of population density and building intensity recommended for the various districts and other territory covered by the plan.” Other examples of statutory references to general plan standards include those found in §66477 (the Quimby Act) and §66479 (reservations of land within subdivisions). Of course, a local legislature may adopt any other general plan standards it deems desirable.

Examples of standards:

- High-density residential means 20 to 30 dwelling units per acre and up to 41 dwelling units per acre with a density bonus.
- The first floor of all new construction shall be at least two feet above the base flood elevation.

Plan Proposal

A plan proposal describes the development intended to take place in an area. Plan proposals are often expressed on the general plan diagram.

Examples of plan proposals:

- First Street and Harbor Avenue are designated as arterials.
- The proposed downtown shopping center will be located within the area bound by D and G Avenues and Third and Fourth Streets.
- A new parking structure shall be located in the vicinities of each of the following downtown intersections: First Street and A Avenue, and Fifth Street and D Avenue.

Implementation Measure

An implementation measure is an action, procedure, program, or technique that carries out general plan policy. Each policy must have at least one corresponding implementation measure.

Examples of implementation measures:

- The city shall adopt a specific plan for the industrial park.
- Areas designated by the land use element for agriculture shall be placed in the agricultural zone.

Linking Objectives to Implementation

The following examples show the relationships among objectives, policies, and implementation measures. The examples are arranged according to a hierarchy from the general to the specific—from goals to implementation measures. In an actual general plan, there might be more than one policy under each objective, more than one implementation measure under each policy, etc.

Goal:

- A thriving downtown that is the center of the city's retail and service commercial activities.

Objective:

- Development of a new regional shopping center in the downtown.

Policy:

- The city shall not approve discretionary projects or building permits that could impede development of the downtown regional shopping center.

Implementation measures:

- The city shall adopt an interim zoning ordinance restricting further development in the general vicinity of the proposed downtown shopping center until a study has been completed determining its exact configuration.
- During the interim zoning period, the city shall adopt a special regional shopping center zoning classification that permits the development of the proposed downtown mall.
- Upon completion of the study, the city council shall select a site for the downtown mall and shall apply the shopping center zone to the property.

Goal:

- Affordable, decent, and sanitary housing for all members of the community.

Objective:

- 500 additional dwelling units for low-income households by 2010.

Policy:

- When a developer of housing within the high-density residential designation agrees to construct at least 30 percent of the total units of a housing development for low-income households, the city shall grant a 40 percent density bonus for the housing project.

Implementation measure:

- The city shall amend its zoning ordinance to allow for a 40 percent density bonus in the high-density residential zone.

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